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HE IRISH LAND QUESTION

JOHN STUART MILL.

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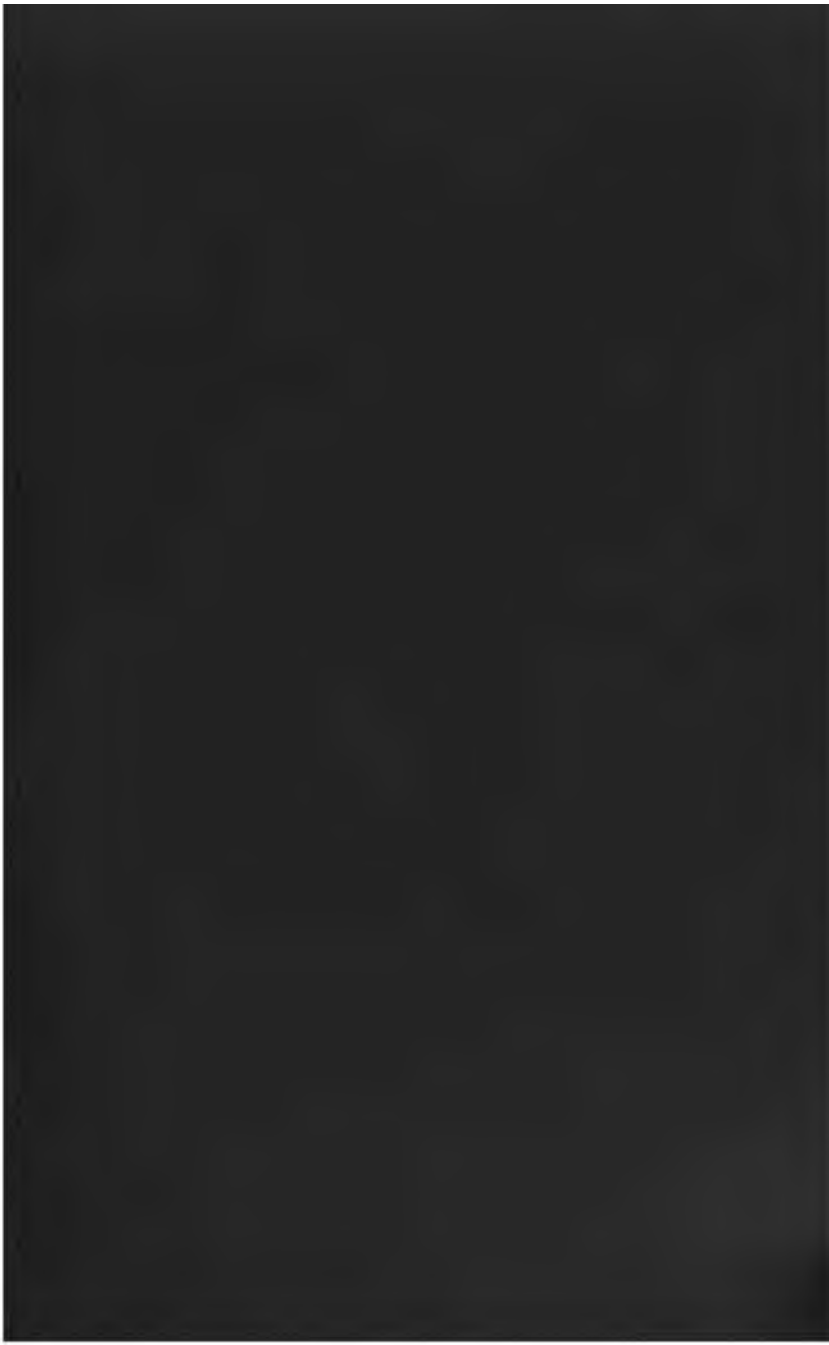

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BY

JOHN STUART MILL

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OF PEASANT PROPRIETORS.

PART I.

§ 1. In the régime of peasant properties, as in that of slavery, the whole produce belongs to a single owner, and the distinction of rent, profits, and wages, does not exist. In all other respects, the two states of society are the extreme opposites of each other. The one is the state of greatest oppression and degradation to the labouring class. The other is that in which they are the most uncontrolled arbiters of their own lot.

The advantage, however, of small properties in land, is one of the most disputed questions in the range of political economy. On the Continent, though there are some dissentients from the prevailing opinion, the benefit of having a numerous proprietary population exists in the minds of most people in the form of an axiom. But English authorities are either unaware of the judgment of Continental agriculturists, or are content to put it aside, on the plea of their having no experience of large properties in favourable circumstances: the advantage of large properties being only felt where there are also large farms; and as this, in arable districts, implies a greater accumulation of capital than usually exists on the Continent, the great Continental estates, except in the case of grazing farms, are mostly let out for cultivation in small portions. There is some truth in this; but the argument admits of being retorted; for if the Continent knows little, by experience, of cultivation on a large scale and by large capital, the generality of English writers are no better acquainted practically with peasant pro-

prietors, and have almost always the most erroneous ideas of their social condition and mode of life. Yet the old traditions even of England are on the same side with the general opinion of the Continent. The "yeomanry" who were vaunted as the glory of England while they existed, and have been so much mourned over since they disappeared, were either small proprietors or small farmers, and if they were mostly the last, the character they bore for sturdy independence is the more noticeable. There is a part of England, unfortunately a very small part, where peasant proprietors are still common; for such are the "statesmen" of Cumberland and Westmoreland, though they pay, I believe, generally if not universally, certain customary dues, which, being fixed, no more affect their character of proprietors than the land-tax does. There is but one voice, among those acquainted with the country, on the admirable effects of this tenure of land in those counties. No other agricultural population in England could have furnished the originals of Wordsworth's peasantry.*

* In Mr. Wordsworth's little descriptive work on the scenery of the Lakes, he speaks of the upper part of the dales as having been for centuries "a perfect republic of shepherds and agriculturists, proprietors, for the most part, of the lands which they occupied and cultivated. The plough of each man was confined to the maintenance of his own family, or to the occasional accommodation of his neighbour. Two or three cows furnished each family with milk and cheese. The chapel was the only edifice that presided over these dwellings, the supreme head of this pure commonwealth; the members of which existed in the midst of a powerful empire, like an ideal society, or an organized community, whose constitution had been imposed and regulated by the mountains which protected it. Neither high-born nobleman, knight, nor esquire was here; but many of these humble sons of the hills had a consciousness that the land which they walked over and tilled had for more than five hundred years been possessed by men of their name and blood. . . . Corn was grown in these vales sufficient upon each estate to furnish bread for each family, no more. The storms and moisture of the climate induced them to sprinkle their upland property with outhouses of native stone, as places of shelter for their sheep, where, in tempestuous weather, food was distributed to them. Every family spun from its own flock the wool with which it was clothed; a weaver was here and there found among them, and the rest of their wants was supplied by the produce of the yarn, which they carded and spun in their own houses, and carried to market either under their arms, or more frequently on packhorses, a small train taking their way weekly down the valley, or over the mountains, to the most commodious town."—*A Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England*, 3rd edit. pp. 50 to 53 and 63 to 65.

The general system, however, of English cultivation, affording no experience to render the nature and operation of peasant properties familiar, and Englishmen being in general profoundly ignorant of the agricultural economy of other countries, the very idea of peasant proprietors is strange to the English mind, and does not easily find access to it. Even the forms of language stand in the way: the familiar designation for owners of land being "landlords," a term to which "tenants" is always understood as a correlative. When, at the time of the famine, the suggestion of peasant properties as a means of Irish improvement found its way into parliamentary and newspaper discussions, there were writers of pretension to whom the word "proprietor" was so far from conveying any distinct idea, that they mistook the small holdings of Irish cottier tenants for peasant properties. The subject being so little understood, I think it important, before entering into the theory of it, to do something towards showing how the case stands as to matter of fact; by exhibiting, at greater length than would otherwise be admissible, some of the testimony which exists respecting the state of cultivation, and the comfort and happiness of the cultivators, in those countries and parts of countries, in which the greater part of the land has neither landlord nor farmer, other than the labourer who tills the soil.

§ 2. I lay no stress on the condition of North America, where, as is well known, the land, wherever free from the curse of slavery, is almost universally owned by the same person who holds the plough. A country combining the natural fertility of America with the knowledge and arts of modern Europe, is so peculiarly circumstanced, that scarcely anything, except insecurity of property or a tyrannical government, could materially impair the prosperity of the industrious classes. I might, with Sismondi, insist more strongly on the case of ancient Italy, especially Latium, that Campagna which then swarmed with inhabitants in the very regions which under a contrary régime have become uninhabitable from malaria. But I prefer taking the evidence of the same writer on things known to him by personal observation.

"It is especially Switzerland," says M. de Sismondi, "which should be traversed and studied to judge of the happiness of peasant proprietors. It is from Switzerland we learn that agriculture, practised by the very persons who enjoy its fruits, suffices to procure great comfort for a very numerous population; a great independence of character, arising from independence of position; a great commerce of consumption, the result of the easy circumstances of all the inhabitants, even in a country whose climate is rude, whose soil is but moderately fertile, and where late frosts and inconstancy of seasons often blight the hopes of the cultivator. It is impossible to see without admiration those timber houses of the poorest peasant, so vast, so well closed in, so covered with carvings. In the interior, spacious corridors separate the different chambers of the numerous family; each chamber has but one bed, which is abundantly furnished with curtains, bedclothes, and the whitest linen; carefully kept furniture surrounds it; the wardrobes are filled with linen; the dairy is vast, well aired, and of exquisite cleanness; under the same roof is a great provision of corn, salt meat, cheese and wood; in the cow-houses are the finest and most carefully tended cattle in Europe; the garden is planted with flowers, both men and women are cleanly and warmly clad, the women preserve with pride their ancient costume; all carry in their faces the impress of health and strength. Let other nations boast of their opulence, Switzerland may always point with pride to her peasants."*

The same eminent writer thus expresses his opinions on peasant proprietorship in general.

"Wherever we find peasant proprietors, we also find the comfort, security, confidence in the future, and independence, which assure at once happiness and virtue. The peasant who with his children does all the work of his little inheritance, who pays no rent to any one above him, nor wages to any one below, who regulates his production by his consumption, who eats his own corn, drinks his own wine, is clothed in his own hemp and wool, cares little for the prices of the market; for he has little to sell and little to buy, and is never

ruined by revulsions of trade. Instead of fearing for the future, he sees it in the colours of hope; for he employs every moment not required by the labours of the year, on something profitable to his children and to future generations. A few minutes' work suffices him to plant the seed which in a hundred years will be a large tree, to dig the channel which will conduct to him a spring of fresh water, to improve by cares often repeated, but stolen from odd times, all the species of animals and vegetables which surround him. His little patrimony is a true savings bank, always ready to receive all his little gains and utilize all his moments of leisure. The ever-acting power of nature returns them a hundred-fold. The peasant has a lively sense of the happiness attached to the condition of a proprietor. Accordingly he is always eager to buy land at any price. He pays more for it than its value, more perhaps than it will bring him in; but is he not right in estimating highly the advantage of having always an advantageous investment for his labour, without underbidding in the wages-market—of being always able to find bread, without the necessity of buying it at a scarcity price?

"The peasant proprietor is of all cultivators the one who gets most from the soil, for he is the one who thinks most of the future, and who has been most instructed by experience. He is also the one who employs the human powers to most advantage, because dividing his occupations among all the members of his family, he reserves some for every day of the year, so that nobody is ever out of work. Of all cultivators he is the happiest, and at the same time the land nowhere occupies, and feeds amply without becoming exhausted, so many inhabitants as where they are proprietors. Finally, of all cultivators the peasant proprietor is the one who gives most encouragement to commerce and manufactures, because he is the richest."*

* And in another work (*New Principles of Political Economy*, book iii. chap. 3) he says, "When we traverse nearly the whole of Switzerland, and several provinces of France, Italy, and Germany, we need never ask, in looking at any piece of land, if it belongs to a peasant proprietor or to a farmer. The intelligent care, the enjoyments provided for the labourer, the adornment which the country has received from his hands, are clear indications of the former. It

This picture of unwearied assiduity, and what may be called affectionate interest in the land, is borne out in regard to the more intelligent Cantons of Switzerland by English observers. "In walking anywhere in the neighbourhood of Zurich," says Mr. Inglis, "in looking to the right or to the left, one is struck with the extraordinary industry of the inhabitants; and if we learn that a proprietor here has a return of ten per cent, we are inclined to say, 'he deserves it.' I speak at present of country labour, though I believe that in every kind of trade also, the people of Zurich are remarkable for their assiduity; but in the industry they show in the cultivation of their land I may safely say they are unrivalled. When I used to open my casement between four and five in the morning to look out upon the lake and the distant Alps, I saw the labourer in the fields; and when I returned from an evening walk, long after sunset, as late, perhaps, as half-past eight, there was the labourer, mowing his grass, or tying up his vines. . . . It is impossible to look at a field, a garden, a hedging, scarcely even a tree, a flower, or a vegetable, without perceiving proofs of the extreme care and industry that are bestowed upon the cultivation of the soil. If for example, a path leads through, or by the side of, a field of grain, the corn is not, as in England, permitted to hang over the path, exposed to be pulled or trodden down by every passer-by; it is everywhere bounded by a fence, stakes are placed at intervals of about a yard, and about two or three feet from the ground, boughs of trees are passed longitudinally along. If you look into a field towards evening, where there are large beds of cauli-

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is true, an oppressive government may destroy the comfort and brutify the intelligence which should be the result of property; taxation may abstract the best produce of the fields, the insolence of government officers may disturb the security of the peasant, the impossibility of obtaining justice against a powerful neighbour may sow discouragement in his mind, and in the fine country which has been given back to the administration of the King of Sardinia, the proprietor, equally with the day-labourer, wears the livery of indigence." He was here speaking of Savoy, where the peasants were generally proprietors, and, according to authentic accounts, extremely miserable. But, as M. de Sismondi continues, "it is in vain to observe only one of the rules of political economy; it cannot by itself suffice to produce good; but at least it diminishes evil."

flower or cabbage, you will find that every single plant has been watered. In the gardens, which around Zurich are extremely large, the most punctilious care is evinced in every production that grows. The vegetables are planted with seemingly mathematical accuracy; not a single weed is to be seen, not a single stone. Plants are not earthed up as with us, but are planted in a small hollow, into each of which a little manure is put, and each plant is watered daily. Where seeds are sown, the earth directly above is broken into the finest powder; every shrub, every flower is tied to a stake, and where there is wall-fruit a trellice is erected against the wall, to which the boughs are fastened, and there is not a single thing that has not its appropriate resting place."*

Of one of the remote valleys of the High Alps the same writer thus expresses himself:†—

"In the whole of the Engadine the land belongs to the peasantry, who, like the inhabitants of every other place where this state of things exists, vary greatly in the extent of their possessions. . . . Generally speaking, an Engadine peasant lives entirely upon the produce of his land, with the exception of the few articles of foreign growth required in his family, such as coffee, sugar, and wine. Flax is grown, prepared, spun, and woven, without ever leaving his house. He has also his own wool, which is converted into a blue coat, without passing through the hands of either the dyer or the tailor. The country is incapable of greater cultivation than it has received. All has been done for it that industry and an extreme love of gain can devise. There is not a foot of waste land in the Engadine, the lowest part of which is not much lower than the top of Snowdon. Wherever grass will grow, there it is; wherever a rock will bear a blade, verdure is seen upon it; wherever an ear of rye will ripen, there it is to be found. Barley and oats have also their appropriate spots; and wherever it is possible to ripen a little patch of wheat, the cultivation of it is attempted. In no

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* *Switzerland, the South of France, and the Pyrenees, in* 1830. By H. D. Inglis. Vol. i. ch. 2.

† Ibid. ch. 8 and 10.

country in Europe will be found so few poor as in the Engadine. In the village of Suss, which contains about six hundred inhabitants, there is not a single individual who has not wherewithal to live comfortably, not a single individual who is indebted to others for one morsel that he eats."

Notwithstanding the general prosperity of the Swiss peasantry, this total absence of pauperism and (it may almost be said) of poverty, cannot be predicated of the whole country; the largest and richest canton, that of Berne, being an example of the contrary; for although, in the parts of it which are occupied by peasant proprietors, their industry is as remarkable and their ease and comfort as conspicuous as elsewhere, the canton is burthened with a numerous pauper population, through the operation of the worst regulated system of poor-law administration in Europe, except that of England before the new Poor Law.* Nor is Switzerland in some other respects a favourable example of all that peasant properties might effect. There exists a series of statistical accounts of the Swiss cantons, drawn up mostly with great care and intelligence, containing detailed information, of tolerably recent date, respecting the condition of the land and of the people. From these, the subdivision appears to be often so minute, that it can hardly be supposed not to be excessive: and the indebtedness of the proprietors in the flourishing canton of Zurich "borders," as the writer expresses it, "on the incredible;" so that "only the intensest industry, frugality, temperance, and complete freedom of commerce enable them to stand their ground."† Yet the general conclusion deducible from

* There have been considerable changes in the Poor Law administration and legislation of the Canton of Berne since the sentence in the text was written. But I am not sufficiently acquainted with the nature and operation of these changes to speak more particularly of them here.

† *Historical, Geographical and Statistical Picture of Switzerland.* Part I. Canton of Zurich. By Gerold Meyer Von Knonau, 1834 (pp. 80-1). There are villages in Zurich, he adds, in which there is not a single property unmortgaged. It does not, however, follow that each individual proprietor is deeply involved because the aggregate mass of incumbrances is large. In the Canton of Schaffhausen, for instance, it is stated that the landed properties are almost all mortgaged, but rarely for more than one-half their registered value (Part XII. *Canton of Schaffhausen*, by Edward Im-Thurn, 1840, p. 52), and the mort-

these books is that since the beginning of the century, and concurrently with the subdivision of many great estates which belonged to nobles or to the cantonal governments, there has been a striking and rapid improvement in almost every department of agriculture, as well as in the houses, the habits, and the food of the people. The writer of the account of Thürgau goes so far as to say, that since the subdivision of the feudal estates into peasant properties, it is not uncommon for a third or a fourth part of an estate to produce as much grain, and support as many head of cattle, as the whole estate did before.*

§ 3. One of the countries in which peasant proprietors are of oldest date, and most numerous in proportion to the population, is Norway. Of the social and economical condition of that country an interesting account has been given by Mr. Laing. His testimony in favour of small landed properties both there and elsewhere, is given with great decision. I shall quote a few passages.

"If small proprietors are not good farmers, it is not from the same cause here which we are told makes them so in Scotland—indolence and want of exertion. The extent to which irrigation is carried on in these glens and valleys shows a spirit of exertion and *co-operation*" (I request particular attention to this point), "to which the latter can show nothing similar. Hay being the principal winter support of live stock, and both it and corn, as well as potatoes, liable, from the shallow soil and powerful reflection of sunshine from the rocks, to be burnt and withered up, the greatest exertions are made to bring water from the head of each glen, along such a level as will give the command of it to each farmer at the head of his fields. This is done by leading it in wooden troughs (the half of a tree roughly scooped) from the highest perennial stream among the hills, through woods, across ravines, along the rocky, often perpendicular, sides of the glens, and from this main trough giving a lateral one to each farmer in passing the head of his farm. He distributes

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gages are often for the improvement and enlargement of the estate. (Part XVII. *Canton of Thürgau*, by J. A. Pupikofer, 1837, p. 209.)

* *Thürgau*, p. 72.

this supply by moveable troughs among his fields; and at this season waters each rig successively with scoops like those used by bleachers in watering cloth, laying his trough between every two rigs. One would not believe, without seeing it, how very large an extent of land is traversed expeditiously by these artificial showers. The extent of the main troughs is very great. In one glen I walked ten miles, and found it troughed on both sides: on one, the chain is continued down the main valley for forty miles.* Those may be bad farmers who do such things; but they are not indolent, nor ignorant of the principle of working in concert, and keeping up establishments for common benefit. They are undoubtedly, in these respects, far in advance of any community of cottars in our Highland glens. They feel as proprietors, who receive the advantage of their own exertions. The excellent state of the roads and bridges is another proof that the country is inhabited by people who have a common interest to keep them under repair. There are no tolls."†

On the effects of peasant proprietorship on the Continent generally, the same writer expresses himself as follows.‡

"If we listen to the large farmer, the scientific agriculturist, the" [English] "political economist, good farming must perish with large farms; the very idea that good farming can exist, unless on large farms cultivated with great capital, they hold to be absurd.

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* Reichensperger (*The Land Question*) quoted by Mr. Kay, (*Social Condition and Education of the People in England and Europe*) observes, "that the parts of Europe where the most extensive and costly plans for watering the meadows and lands have been carried out in the greatest perfection, are those where the lands are very much subdivided, and are in the hands of small proprietors. He instances the plain round Valencia, several of the southern departments of France, particularly those of Vaucluse and Bouches du Rhône, Lombardy, Tuscany, the districts of Sienna, Lucca, and Bergamo, Piedmont, many parts of Germany, &c., in all which parts of Europe the land is very much subdivided among small proprietors. In all these parts great and expensive systems and plans of general irrigation have been carried out, and are now being supported by the small proprietors themselves; thus showing how they are able to accomplish, by means of combination, work requiring the expenditure of great quantities of capital."—*Kay*, i. 126.

† Laing, *Journal of a Residence in Norway*, pp. 36, 37.

‡ *Notes of a Traveller*, pp. 299 et seqq.

Draining, manuring, economical arrangement, cleaning the land, regular rotations, valuable stock and implements, all belong exclusively to large farms, worked by large capital, and by hired labour. This reads very well; but if we raise our eyes from their books to their fields, and coolly compare what we see in the best districts farmed in large farms, with what we see in the best districts farmed in small farms, we see, and there is no blinking the fact, better crops on the ground in Flanders, East Friesland, Holstein, in short, on the whole line of the arable land of equal quality of the Continent, from the Sound to Calais, than we see on the line of British coast opposite to this line, and in the same latitudes, from the Frith of Forth all round to Dover. Minute labour on small portions of arable ground gives evidently, in equal soils and climate, a superior productiveness, where these small portions belong in property, as in Flanders, Holland, Friesland, and Ditmarsch in Holstein, to the farmer. It is not pretended by our agricultural writers, that our large farmers, even in Berwickshire, Roxburghshire, or the Lothians, approach to the garden-like cultivation, attention to manures, drainage, and clean state of the land, or in productiveness from a small space of soil not originally rich, which distinguish the small farmers of Flanders, or their system. In the best-farmed parish in Scotland or England, more land is wasted in the corners and borders of the fields of large farms, in the roads through them, unnecessarily wide because they are bad, and bad because they are wide, in neglected commons, waste spots, useless belts and clumps of sorry trees, and such unproductive areas, than would maintain the poor of the parish, if they were all laid together and cultivated. But large capital applied to farming is of course only applied to the very best of the soils of a country. It cannot touch the small unproductive spots which require more time and labour to fertilize them than is consistent with a quick return of capital. But although hired time and labour cannot be applied beneficially to such cultivation, the owner's own time and labour may. He is working for no higher terms at first from his land than a bare living. But in the course of generations fertility and value are produced; a better living, and even very improved processes of hus-

bandry, are attained. Furrow draining, stall feeding all summer, liquid manures, are universal in the husbandry of the small farms of Flanders, Lombardy, Switzerland. Our most improving districts under large farms are but beginning to adopt them. Dairy husbandry even, and the manufacture of the largest cheeses by the co-operation of many small farmers,* the mutual assurance of property against fire and hail-storms, by the co-operation of small farmers—the most scientific and expensive of all agricultural operations in modern times, the manufacture of beet-root sugar—the supply of the European markets with flax and hemp, by the husbandry of small farmers—the abundance of legumes, fruits, poultry, in the usual diet even of the lowest classes abroad, and the total want of such variety at the tables even of our middle classes, and this variety and abundance essentially connected with the husbandry of small farmers—all these are features in the occupation of a country by small proprietor-farmers, which must make the inquirer pause before he admits the dogma of our land doctors at home, that large farms worked by hired labour and great capital can alone bring out the greatest productiveness of the soil, and furnish the greatest supply of the necessaries and conveniences of life to the inhabitants of a country."

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* The manner in which the Swiss peasants combine to carry on cheese-making by their united capital deserves to be noted. "Each parish in Switzerland hires a man, generally from the district of Gruyère, in the Canton of Freyburg, to take care of the herd and make the cheese. One cheeseman, one pressman or assistant, and one cowherd are considered necessary for every forty cows. The owners of the cows get credit each of them, in a book daily for the quantity of milk given by each cow. The cheeseman and his assistants milk the cows, put the milk all together, and make cheese of it, and at the end of the season each owner receives the weight of cheese proportionable to the quantity of milk his cows have delivered. By this co-operative plan, instead of the small-sized unmarketable cheeses only, which each could produce out of his three or four cows' milk, he has the same weight in large marketable cheese superior in quality, because made by people who attend to no other business. The cheeseman and his assistants are paid so much per head of the cows, in money or in cheese, or sometimes they hire the cows, and pay the owners in money or cheese."—*Notes of a Traveller*, p. 351. A similar system exists in the French Jura. See, for full details, Lavergne, *Rural Economy of France*, 2nd ed., pp. 139 et seqq. One of the most remarkable points in this interesting case of combination of labour, is the confidence which it supposes, and which experience must justify, in the integrity of the persons employed.

§ 4. Among the many flourishing regions of Germany in which peasant properties prevail, I select the Palatinate, for the advantage of quoting, from an English source, the results of recent personal observation of its agriculture and its people. Mr. Howitt, a writer whose habit it is to see all English objects and English socialities on their brightest side, and who, in treating of the Rhenish peasantry, certainly does not underrate the rudeness of their implements, and the inferiority of their ploughing, nevertheless shows that under the invigorating influence of the feelings of proprietorship, they make up for the imperfections of their apparatus by the intensity of their application. "The peasant harrows and clears his land till it is in the nicest order, and it is admirable to see the crops which he obtains."* "The peasants† are the great and ever present objects of country life. They are the great population of the country, because they themselves are the possessors. This country is, in fact, for the most part, in the hands of the people. It is parcelled out among the multitude. . . . . The peasants are not, as with us, for the most part, totally cut off from property in the soil they cultivate, totally dependent on the labour afforded by others—they are themselves the proprietors. It is, perhaps, from this cause that they are probably the most industrious peasantry in the world. They labour busily, early and late, because they feel that they are labouring for themselves. . . . . The German peasants work hard, but they have no actual want. Every man has his house, his orchard, his roadside trees, commonly so heavy with fruit, that he is obliged to prop and secure them all ways, or they would be torn to pieces. He has his corn-plot, his plot for mangel-wurzel, for hemp, and so on. He is his own master; and he, and every member of his family, have the strongest motives to labour. You see the effect of this in that unremitting diligence which is beyond that of the whole world besides, and his economy, which is still greater. The Germans, indeed, are not so active and lively as the English. You never see them in a bustle, or as

* *Rural and Domestic Life of Germany*, p. 27.
† Ibid. p. 40.

though they meant to knock off a vast deal in a little time. . . . . They are, on the contrary, slow, but for ever doing. They plod on from day to day, and year to year—the most patient, untirable, and persevering of animals. The English peasant is so cut off from the idea of property, that he comes habitually to look upon it as a thing from which he is warned by the laws of the large proprietors, and becomes, in consequence, spiritless, purposeless. . . . . The German bauer, on the contrary, looks on the country as made for him and his fellow-men. He feels himself a man; he has a stake in the country, as good as that of the bulk of his neighbours; no man can threaten him with ejection, or the workhouse, so long as he is active and economical. He walks, therefore, with a bold step; he looks you in the face with the air of a free man, but of a respectful one."

Of their industry, the same writer thus further speaks: "There is not an hour of the year in which they do not find unceasing occupation. In the depth of winter, when the weather permits them by any means to get out of doors, they are always finding something to do. They carry out their manure to their lands while the frost is in them. If there is not frost, they are busy cleaning ditches and felling old fruit trees, or such as do not bear well. Such of them as are too poor to lay in a sufficient stock of wood, find plenty of work in ascending into the mountainous woods, and bringing thence fuel. It would astonish the English common people to see the intense labour with which the Germans earn their firewood. In the depths of frost and snow, go into any of their hills and woods, and there you find them hacking up stumps, cutting off branches, and gathering, by all means which the official wood-police will allow, boughs, stakes, and pieces of wood, which they convey home with the most incredible toil and patience."* After a description of their careful and laborious vineyard culture, he continues,† "In England, with its great quantity of grass lands, and its large farms, so soon as the grain is in, and the fields are shut up

for hay grass, the country seems in a comparative state of rest and quiet. But here they are everywhere, and for ever, hoeing and mowing, planting and cutting, weeding and gathering. They have a succession of crops like a market-gardener. They have their carrots, poppies, hemp, flax, saintfoin, lucerne, rape, colewort, cabbage, rotabaga, black turnips, Swedish and white turnips, teazles, Jerusalem artichokes, mangel-wurzel, parsnips, kidney-beans, field-beans, and peas, vetches, Indian corn, buckwheat, madder for the manufacturer, potatoes, their great crop of tobacco, millet—all, or the greater part, under the family management, in their own family allotments. They have had these things first to sow, many of them to transplant, to hoe, to weed, to clear off insects, to top; many of them to mow and gather in successive crops. They have their water-meadows, of which kind almost all their meadows are, to flood, to mow, and reflood; watercourses to reopen and to make anew: their early fruits to gather, to bring to market with their green crops of vegetables; their cattle, sheep, calves, foals, most of them prisoners, and poultry to look after; their vines, as they shoot rampantly in the summer heat, to prune, and thin out the leaves when they are too thick: and any one may imagine what a scene of incessant labour it is."

This interesting sketch, to the general truth of which any observant traveller in that highly cultivated and populous region can bear witness, accords with the more elaborate delineation by a distinguished inhabitant, Professor Rau, in his little treatise "On the Agriculture of the Palatinate."* Dr. Rau bears testimony not only to the industry but to the skill and intelligence of the peasantry; their judicious employment of manures, and excellent rotation of crops; the progressive improvement of their agriculture for generations past, and the spirit of further improvement which is still active. "The indefatigableness of the country people, who may be seen in activity all the day and all the year, and are never idle, because they make a good distribution of their labours, and find for every

* *On the Agriculture of the Palatinate, and particularly in the territory of Heidelberg.* By Dr. Karl Heinrich Rau. Heidelberg, 1830.

interval of time a suitable occupation, is as well known as their zeal is praiseworthy in turning to use every circumstance which presents itself, in seizing upon every useful novelty which offers, and even in searching out new and advantageous methods. One easily perceives that the peasant of this district has reflected much on his occupation: he can give reasons for his modes of proceeding, even if those reasons are not always tenable; he is as exact an observer of proportions as it is possible to be from memory, without the aid of figures: he attends to such general signs of the times as appear to augur him either benefit or harm."*

The experience of all other parts of Germany is similar. "In Saxony," says Mr. Kay, "it is a notorious fact, that during the last thirty years, and since the peasants became the proprietors of the land, there has been a rapid and continual improvement in the condition of the houses, in the manner of living, in the dress of the peasants, and particularly in the culture of the land. I have twice walked through that part of Saxony called Saxon Switzerland, in company with a German guide, and on purpose to see the state of the villages and of the farming, and I can safely challenge contradiction when I affirm that there is no farming in all Europe superior to the laboriously careful cultivation of the valleys of that part of Saxony. There, as in the cantons of Berne, Vaud, and Zurich, and in the Rhine provinces, the farms are singularly flourishing. They are kept in beautiful condition, and are always neat and well managed. The ground is cleared as if it were a garden. No hedges or brushwood encumber it. Scarcely a rush or thistle or a bit of rank grass is to be seen. The meadows are well watered every spring with liquid manure, saved from the drainings of the farm yards. The grass is so free from weeds that the Saxon meadows reminded me more of English lawns than of anything else I had seen. The peasants endeavour to outstrip one another in the quantity and quality of the produce, in the preparation of the ground, and in the general cultivation of their respective portions. All the little proprietors are eager to find out how to farm so as to

* Ray, pp. 15, 16.

produce the greatest results; they diligently seek after improvements; they send their children to the agricultural schools in order to fit them to assist their fathers; and each proprietor soon adopts a new improvement introduced by any of his neighbours."* If this be not overstated, it denotes a state of intelligence very different not only from that of English labourers but of English farmers.

Mr. Kay's book, published in 1850, contains a mass of evidence gathered from observation and inquiries in many different parts of Europe, together with attestations from many distinguished writers, to the beneficial effects of peasant properties. Among the testimonies which he cites respecting their effect on agriculture, I select the following.

"Reichensperger, himself an inhabitant of that part of Prussia where the land is the most subdivided, has published a long and very elaborate work to show the admirable consequences of a system of freeholds in land. He expresses a very decided opinion that not only are the *gross* products of any given number of acres held and cultivated by small or peasant proprietors, greater than the gross products of an equal number of acres held by a few great proprietors, and cultivated by tenant farmers, but that the *net* products of the former, after deducting all the expenses of cultivation, are also greater than the net products of the latter. . . . He mentions one fact which seems to prove that the fertility of the land in countries where the properties are small, must be rapidly increasing. He says that the price of the land which is divided into small properties in the Prussian Rhine provinces, is much higher, and has been rising much more rapidly, than the price of land on the great estates. He and Professor Rau both say that this rise in the price of the small estates would have ruined the more recent purchasers, unless the productiveness of the small estates had increased in at least an equal proportion; and *as the small proprietors have been gradually*

* *The Social Condition and Education of the People in England and Europe; showing the results of the Primary Schools, and of the division of Landed Property in Foreign Countries.* By Joseph Kay, Esq., M.A., Barrister-at-Law, and late Travelling Bachelor of the University of Cambridge. Vol. i. pp. 138-40.

becoming more and more prosperous notwithstanding the increasing prices they have paid for their land, he argues, with apparent justness, that this would seem to show that not only the gross profits of the small estates, but the net profits also have been gradually increasing, and that the net profits per acre, of land, when farmed by small proprietors, are greater than the net profits per acre of land farmed by a great proprietor. He says, with seeming truth, that the increasing price of land in the small estates cannot be the mere effect of competition, or it would have diminished the profits and the prosperity of the small proprietors, and that this result has not followed the rise.

"Albrecht Thaer, another celebrated German writer on the different systems of agriculture, in one of his later works ('Principles of Rational Agriculture') expresses his decided conviction, that the *net produce* of land is greater when farmed by small proprietors than when farmed by great proprietors or their tenants. . . . This opinion of Thaer is all the more remarkable, as, during the early part of his life, he was very strongly in favour of the English system of great estates and great farms."

Mr. Kay adds from his own observation, "The peasant farming of Prussia, Saxony, Holland, and Switzerland is the most perfect and economical farming I have ever witnessed in any country."*

§ 5. But the most decisive example in opposition to the English prejudice against cultivation by peasant proprietors, is the case of Belgium. The soil is originally one of the worst in Europe. "The provinces," says Mr. M'Culloch,† "of West and East Flanders, and Hainault, form a far stretching plain, of which the luxuriant vegetation indicates the indefatigable care and labour bestowed upon its cultivation; for the natural soil consists almost wholly of barren sand, and its great fertility is entirely the result of very skilful management and judicious application of various manures." There exists a carefully prepared and comprehensive treatise on Flemish Husbandry, in the Farmer's Series of the Society for the Diffusion

of Useful Knowledge. The writer observes,* that the Flemish agriculturists "seem to want nothing but a space to work upon: whatever be the quality or texture of the soil, in time they will make it produce something. The sand in the Campine can be compared to nothing but the sands on the sea-shore, which they probably were originally. It is highly interesting to follow step by step the progress of improvement. Here you see a cottage and rude cow-shed erected on a spot of the most unpromising aspect. The loose white sand blown into irregular mounds is only kept together by the roots of the heath: a small spot only is levelled and surrounded by a ditch: part of this is covered with young broom, part is planted with potatoes, and perhaps a small patch of diminutive clover may show itself:" but manures, both solid and liquid, are collecting, "and this is the nucleus from which, in a few years, a little farm will spread around. . . . If there is no manure at hand, the only thing that can be sown, on pure sand, at first, is broom: this grows in the most barren soils; in three years it is fit to cut, and produces some return in fagots for the bakers and brickmakers. The leaves which have fallen have somewhat enriched the soil, and the fibres of the roots have given a certain degree of compactness. It may now be ploughed and sown with buckwheat, or even with rye without manure. By the time this is reaped, some manure may have been collected, and a regular course of cropping may begin. As soon as clover and potatoes enable the farmer to keep cows and make manure, the improvement goes on rapidly; in a few years the soil undergoes a complete change: it becomes mellow and retentive of moisture, and enriched by the vegetable matter afforded by the decomposition of the roots of clover and other plants. . . . After the land has been gradually brought into a good state, and is cultivated in a regular manner, there appears much less difference between the soils which have been originally good, and those which have been made so by labour and industry. At least the crops in both appear more nearly alike at harvest, than is the case in soils of different qualities in other countries. This is a great proof of the

* Pp. 11-14.

excellency of the Flemish system; for it shows that the land is in a constant state of improvement, and that the deficiency of the soil is compensated by greater attention to tillage and manuring, especially the latter."

The people who labour thus intensely, because labouring for themselves, have practised for centuries those principles of rotation of crops and economy of manures, which in England are counted among modern discoveries: and even now the superiority of their agriculture, as a whole, to that of England, is admitted by competent judges. "The cultivation of a poor light soil, or a moderate soil," says the writer last quoted,* "is generally superior in Flanders to that of the most improved farms of the same kind in Britain. We surpass the Flemish farmer greatly in capital, in varied implements of tillage, in the choice and breeding of cattle and sheep," (though, according to the same authority,† they are much "before us in the feeding of their cows,") "and the British farmer is in general a man of superior education to the Flemish peasant. But in the minute attention to the qualities of the soil, in the management and application of manures of different kinds, in the judicious succession of crops, and especially in the economy of land, so that every part of it shall be in a constant state of production, we have still something to learn from the Flemings," and not from an instructed and enterprising Fleming here and there, but from the general practice.

Much of the most highly cultivated part of the country consists of peasant properties, managed by the proprietors, always either wholly or partly by spade industry.‡ "When the land is cultivated entirely by the spade, and no horses are kept, a cow is kept for every three acres of land, and entirely fed on artificial grasses and roots. This mode of cultivation is principally adopted in the Waes district, where properties are very small. All the labour is done by the different members of the family;" children soon beginning "to assist in various minute operations, according to their

age and strength, such as weeding, hoeing, feeding the cows. If they can raise rye and wheat enough to make their bread, and potatoes, turnips, carrots and clover, for the cows, they do well; and the produce of the sale of their rape-seed, their flax, their hemp, and their butter, after deducting the expense of manure purchased, which is always considerable, gives them a very good profit. Suppose the whole extent of the land to be six acres, which is not an uncommon occupation, and which one man can manage;" then (after describing the cultivation), "if a man with his wife and three young children are considered as equal to three and a half grown up men, the family will require thirty-nine bushels of grain, forty-nine bushels of potatoes, a fat hog, and the butter and milk of one cow: an acre and a half of land will produce the grain and potatoes, and allow some corn to finish the fattening of the hog, which has the extra buttermilk: another acre in clover, carrots, and potatoes, together with the stubble turnips, will more than feed the cow; consequently two and a half acres of land is sufficient to feed this family, and the produce of the other three and a half may be sold to pay the rent or the interest of purchase-money, wear and tear of implements, extra manure, and clothes for the family. But these acres are the most profitable on the farm, for the hemp, flax, and colza are included; and by having another acre in clover and roots, a second cow can be kept, and its produce sold. We have, therefore, a solution of the problem, how a family can live and thrive on six acres of moderate land." After showing by calculation that this extent of land can be cultivated in the most perfect manner by the family without any aid from hired labour, the writer continues, "In a farm of *ten* acres entirely cultivated by the spade, the addition of a man and a woman to the members of the family will render all the operations more easy; and with a horse and cart to carry out the manure, and bring home the produce, and occasionally draw the harrows, *fifteen* acres may be very well cultivated. . . . Thus it will be seen," (this is the result of some pages of details and calculations,*) "that by spade

* *Flemish Husbandry*, p. 81.

husbandry, an industrious man with a small capital, occupying only fifteen acres of good light land, may not only live and bring up a family, *paying a good rent*, but may accumulate a considerable sum in the course of his life." But the indefatigable industry by which he accomplishes this, and of which so large a portion is expended not in the mere cultivation, but in the improvement, for a distant return, of the soil itself—has that industry no connexion with *not* paying rent? Could it exist, without presupposing, at least, a virtually permanent tenure?

As to their mode of living, "the Flemish farmers and labourers live much more economically than the same class in England: they seldom eat meat, except on Sundays and in harvest: buttermilk and potatoes with brown bread is their daily food." It is on this kind of evidence that English travellers, as they hurry through Europe, pronounce the peasantry of every Continental country poor and miserable, its agricultural and social system a failure, and the English the only régime under which labourers are well off. It is, truly enough, the only régime under which labourers, whether well off or not, never attempt to be better. So little are English labourers accustomed to consider it possible that a labourer should not spend all he earns, that they habitually mistake the signs of economy for those of poverty. Observe the true interpretation of the phenomena.

"Accordingly *they are gradually acquiring capital*, and their great ambition is to have land of their own. They eagerly seize every opportunity of purchasing a small farm, and the price is so raised by competition, that land pays little more than two per cent. interest for the purchase money. Large properties gradually disappear, and are divided into small portions, which sell at a high rate. But the wealth and industry of the population is continually increasing, being rather diffused through the masses than accumulated in individuals."

With facts like these, known and accessible, it is not a little surprising to find the case of Flanders referred to not in recommendation of peasant properties, but as a warning against them; on no better ground than a presumptive excess of population, in-

ferred from the distress which existed among the peasantry of Brabant and East Flanders in the disastrous year 1846-47. The evidence which I have cited from a writer conversant with the subject, and having no economical theory to support, shows that the distress, whatever may have been its severity, arose from no insufficiency in these little properties to supply abundantly, in any ordinary circumstances, the wants of all whom they have to maintain. It arose from the essential condition to which those are subject who employ land of their own in growing their own food, namely, that the vicissitudes of the seasons must be borne by themselves, and cannot, as in the case of large farmers, be shifted from them to the consumer. When we remember the season of 1846, a partial failure of all kinds of grain, and an almost total one of the potato, it is no wonder that in so unusual a calamity the produce of six acres, half of them sown with flax, hemp, or oil seeds, should fall short of a year's provision for a family. But we are not to contrast the distressed Flemish peasant with an English capitalist who farms several hundred acres of land. If the peasant were an Englishman, he would not be that capitalist, but a day labourer under a capitalist. And is there no distress, in times of dearth, among day labourers? Was there none, that year, in countries where small proprietors and small farmers are unknown? I am aware of no reason for believing that the distress was greater in Belgium, than corresponds to the proportional extent of the failure of crops compared with other countries.*

§ 6. The evidence of the beneficial operation of peasant pro-

* As much of the distress lately complained of in Belgium, as partakes in any degree of a permanent character, appears to be almost confined to the portion of the population who carry on manufacturing labour, either by itself or in conjunction with agricultural; and to be occasioned by a diminished demand for Belgic manufactures.

To the preceding testimonies respecting Germany, Switzerland, and Belgium, may be added the following from Niebuhr, respecting the Roman Campagna. In a letter from Tivoli, he says, "Wherever you find hereditary farmers, or small proprietors, there you also find industry and honesty. I believe that a man who would employ a large fortune in establishing small freeholds might put an end to robbery in the mountain districts."—*Life and Letters of Niebuhr*, vol. ii. p. 149.

perties in the Channel Islands is of so decisive a character, that I cannot help adding to the numerous citations already made, part of a description of the economical condition of those islands, by a writer who combines personal observation with an attentive study of the information afforded by others. Mr. William Thornton, in his "Plea for Peasant Proprietors," a book which by the excellence both of its materials and of its execution, deserves to be regarded as the standard work on that side of the question, speaks of the island of Guernsey in the following terms: "Not even in England is nearly so large a quantity of produce sent to market from a tract of such limited extent. This of itself might prove that the cultivators must be far removed above poverty, for being absolute owners of all the produce raised by them, they of course sell only what they do not themselves require. But the satisfactoriness of their condition is apparent to every observer. 'The happiest community,' says Mr. Hill, 'which it has ever been my lot to fall in with, is to be found in this little island of Guernsey.' 'No matter,' says Sir George Head, 'to what point the traveller may choose to bend his way, comfort everywhere prevails.' What most surprises the English visitor in his first walk or drive beyond the bounds of St. Peter's Port is the appearance of the habitations with which the landscape is thickly studded. Many of them are such as in his own country would belong to persons of middle rank; but he is puzzled to guess what sort of people live in the others, which, though in general not large enough for farmers, are almost invariably much too good in every respect for day labourers. . . . Literally, in the whole island, with the exception of a few fishermen's huts, there is not one so mean as to be likened to the ordinary habitation of an English farm labourer. . . . 'Look,' says a late Bailiff of Guernsey, Mr. De L'Isle Brock, 'at the hovels of the English, and compare them with the cottages of our peasantry.' . . . Beggars are utterly unknown. . . . Pauperism, able-bodied pauperism at least, is nearly as rare as mendicancy. The Savings Banks accounts also bear witness to the general abundance enjoyed by the labouring classes of Guernsey. In the year 1841, there were in England, out of a population of nearly fifteen millions, less than 700,000 depositors,

or one in every twenty persons, and the average amount of the deposits was 30*l.* In Guernsey, in the same year, out of a population of 26,000, the number of depositors was 1920, and the average amount of the deposits 40*l.*"* The evidence as to Jersey and Alderney is of a similar character.

Of the efficiency and productiveness of agriculture on the small properties of the Channel Islands, Mr. Thornton produces ample evidence, the result of which he sums up as follows: "Thus it appears that in the two principal Channel Islands, the agricultural population is, in the one twice, and in the other, three times, as dense as in Britain, there being in the latter country, only one cultivator to twenty-two acres of cultivated land, while in Jersey there is one to eleven, and in Guernsey one to seven acres. Yet the agriculture of these islands maintains, besides cultivators, non-agricultural populations, respectively four and five times as dense as that of Britain. This difference does not arise from any superiority of soil or climate possessed by the Channel Islands, for the former is naturally rather poor, and the latter is not better than in the southern counties of England. It is owing entirely to the assiduous care of the farmers, and to the abundant use of manure."† "In the year 1837," he says in another place,‡ "the average yield of wheat in the large farms of England was only twenty-one bushels, and the highest average for any one county was no more than twenty-six bushels. The highest average since claimed for the whole of England is thirty bushels. In Jersey, where the average size of farms is only sixteen acres, the average produce of wheat per acre was stated by Inglis in 1834 to be thirty-six bushels; but it is proved by official tables to have been forty bushels in the five years ending with 1833. In Guernsey, where farms are still smaller, four quarters per acre, according to Inglis, is considered a good, but still a very common crop." "Thirty shillings§ an acre would be thought in England a very fair rent for middling land;

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* *A Plea for Peasant Proprietors.* By William Thomas Thornton, pp. 99-104.

† Ibid. p. 38. ‡ Ibid. p. 9. § Ibid. p. 32.

but in the Channel Islands, it is only very inferior land that would not let for at least 4*l.*"

§ 7. It is from France, that impressions unfavourable to peasant properties are generally drawn: it is in France that the system is so often asserted to have brought forth its fruit in the most wretched possible agriculture, and to be rapidly reducing, if not to have already reduced the peasantry, by subdivision of land, to the verge of starvation. It is difficult to account for the general prevalence of impressions so much the reverse of truth. The agriculture of France was wretched and the peasantry in great indigence before the Revolution. At that time they were not, so universally as at present, landed proprietors. There were, however, considerable districts of France where the land, even then, was to a great extent the property of the peasantry, and among these were many of the most conspicuous exceptions to the general bad agriculture and to the general poverty. An authority, on this point, not to be disputed, is Arthur Young, the inveterate enemy of small farms, the coryphæus of the modern English school of agriculturists; who yet, travelling over nearly the whole of France in 1787, 1788, and 1789, when he finds remarkable excellence of cultivation, never hesitates to ascribe it to peasant property. "Leaving Sauve," says he,* "I was much struck with a large tract of land, seemingly nothing but huge rocks; yet most of it enclosed and planted with the most industrious attention. Every man has an olive, a mulberry, an almond, or a peach tree, and vines scattered among them; so that the whole ground is covered with the oddest mixture of these plants and bulging rocks, that can be conceived. The inhabitants of this village deserve encouragement for their industry; and if I were a French minister they should have it. They would soon turn all the deserts around them into gardens. Such a knot of active husbandmen, who turn their rocks into scenes of fertility because I suppose *their own*, would do the same by the wastes, if animated by the same omnipotent principle." Again:† "Walk to

* Arthur Young's *Travels in France*, vol. i. p. 50. † Ibid. vol. i. p. 88.

Rossendal," (near Dunkirk,) "where M. le Brun has an improvement on the Dunes, which he very obligingly showed me. Between the town and that place is a great number of neat little houses, built each with its garden, and one or two fields enclosed, of most wretched blowing *dune* sand, naturally as white as snow, but improved by industry. The magic of *property* turns sand to gold." And again:* "Going out of Gange, I was surprised to find by far the greatest exertion in irrigation which I had yet seen in France; and then passed by some steep mountains, highly cultivated in terraces. Much watering at St. Lawrence. The scenery very interesting to a farmer. From Gange, to the mountain of rough ground which I crossed, the ride has been the most interesting which I have taken in France; the efforts of industry the most vigorous; the animation the most lively. An activity has been here, that has swept away all difficulties before it, and has clothed the very rocks with verdure. It would be a disgrace to common sense to ask the cause; the enjoyment of property *must* have done it. Give a man the secure possession of a bleak rock, and he will turn it into a garden; give him a nine years' lease of a garden, and he will convert it into a desert."

In his description of the country at the foot of the Western Pyrenees, he speaks no longer from surmise, but from knowledge. "Take† the road to Moneng, and come presently to a scene which was so new to me in France, that I could hardly believe my own eyes. A succession of many well-built, tight, and *comfortable* farming cottages built of stone and covered with tiles; each having its little garden, enclosed by clipt thorn-hedges, with plenty of peach and other fruit-trees, some fine oaks scattered in the hedges, and young trees nursed up with so much care, that nothing but the fostering attention of the owner could effect anything like it. To every house belongs a farm, perfectly well enclosed, with grass borders mown and neatly kept around the corn-fields, with gates to pass from one enclosure to another. There are some parts of England (where small yeomen still remain) that resemble this

* Arthur Young's *Travels in France*, p. 51. † Young, p. 56.

country of Béarn; but we have very little that is equal to what I have seen in this ride of twelve miles from Pau to Moneng. It is all in the hands of little proprietors, without the farms being so small as to occasion a vicious and miserable population. An air of neatness, warmth, and comfort breathes over the whole. It is visible in their new built houses and stables; in their little gardens; in their hedges; in the courts before their doors; even in the coops for their poultry, and the sties for their hogs. A peasant does not think of rendering his pig comfortable, if his own happiness hang by the thread of a nine years' lease. We are now in Béarn, within a few miles of the cradle of Henry IV. Do they inherit these blessings from that good prince? The benignant genius of that good monarch seems to reign still over the country; each peasant has *the fowl in the pot.*" He frequently notices the excellence of the agriculture of French Flanders, where the farms "are all small, and much in the hands of little proprietors."* In the Pays de Caux, also a country of small properties, the agriculture was miserable; of which his explanation was that it "is a manufacturing country, and farming is but a secondary pursuit to the cotton fabric, which spreads over the whole of it."† The same district is still a seat of manufactures, and a country of small proprietors, and is now, whether we judge from the appearance of the crops or from the official returns, one of the best cultivated in France. In "Flanders, Alsace, and part of Artois, as well as on the banks of the Garonne, France possesses a husbandry equal to our own."‡ Those countries, and a considerable part of Quercy, "are cultivated more like gardens than farms. Perhaps they are too much like gardens, from the smallness of properties."§ In those districts the admirable rotation of crops, so long practised in Italy, but at that time generally neglected in France, was already universal. "The rapid succession of crops, the harvest of one being but the signal of sowing immediately for a second," (the same fact which strikes all observers in the valley of the Rhine,) "can scarcely be carried to

greater perfection: and this is a point, perhaps, of all others the most essential to good husbandry, when such crops are so justly distributed as we generally find them in these provinces; cleaning and ameliorating ones being made the preparation for such as foul and exhaust."

It must not, however, be supposed, that Arthur Young's testimony on the subject of peasant properties is uniformly favourable. In Lorraine, Champagne, and elsewhere, he finds the agriculture bad, and the small proprietors very miserable, in consequence, as he says, of the extreme subdivision of the land. His opinion is thus summed up:*—"Before I travelled, I conceived that small farms, in property, were very susceptible of good cultivation; and that the occupier of such, having no rent to pay, might be sufficiently at his ease to work improvements, and carry on a vigorous husbandry; but what I have seen in France, has greatly lessened my good opinion of them. In Flanders, I saw excellent husbandry on properties of 30 to 100 acres; but we seldom find here such small patches of property as are common in other provinces. In Alsace, and on the Garonne, that is, on soils of such exuberant fertility as to demand no exertions, some small properties also are well cultivated. In Béarn, I passed through a region of little farmers, whose appearance, neatness, ease, and happiness charmed me; it was what property alone could, on a small scale, effect; but these were by no means contemptibly small; they are, as I judged by the distance from house to house, from 40 to 80 acres. Except these, and a very few other instances, I saw nothing respectable on small properties, except a most unremitting industry. Indeed, it is necessary to impress on the reader's mind, that though the husbandry I met with, in a great variety of instances on little properties, was as bad as can be well conceived, yet the industry of the possessors was so conspicuous, and so meritorious, that no commendations would be too great for it. It was sufficient to prove that property in land is, of all others, the most active instigator to severe and incessant labour. And this truth is of such force and extent, that I know no

* Young, p. 412.

way so sure of carrying tillage to a mountain top, as by permitting the adjoining villagers to acquire it in property; in fact, we see that in the mountains of Languedoc, &c., they have conveyed earth in baskets, on their backs, to form a soil where nature had denied it."

The experience, therefore, of this celebrated agriculturist, and apostle of the *grande culture*, may be said to be, that the effect of small properties, cultivated by peasant proprietors, is admirable when they are not *too* small: so small, namely, as not fully to occupy the time and attention of the family; for he often complains, with great apparent reason, of the quantity of idle time which the peasantry had on their hands when the land was in very small portions, notwithstanding the ardour with which they toiled to improve their little patrimony, in every way which their knowledge or ingenuity could suggest. He recommends, accordingly, that a limit of subdivision should be fixed by law; and this is by no means an indefensible proposition in countries, if such there are, where division, having already gone farther than the state of capital and the nature of the staple articles of cultivation render advisable, still continues progressive. That each peasant should have a patch of land, even in full property, if it is not sufficient to support him in comfort, is a system with all the disadvantages, and scarcely any of the benefits, of small properties; since he must either live in indigence on the produce of his land, or depend as habitually as if he had no landed possessions, on the wages of hired labour: which, besides, if all the holdings surrounding him are of similar dimensions, he has little prospect of finding. The benefits of peasant properties are conditional on their not being too much subdivided; that is, on their not being required to maintain too many persons, in proportion to the produce that can be raised from them by those persons. The question resolves itself, like most questions respecting the condition of the labouring classes, into one of population. Are small properties a stimulus to undue multipli-

PART II.

§ 1. Before examining the influence of peasant properties on the ultimate economical interests of the labouring class, as determined by the increase of population, let us note the points respecting the moral and social influence of that territorial arrangement, which may be looked upon as established, either by the reason of the case, or by the facts and authorities cited in the preceding chapter.

The reader new to the subject must have been struck with the powerful impression made upon all the witnesses to whom I have referred, by what a Swiss statistical writer calls the "almost superhuman industry" of peasant proprietors.* On this point at least, authorities are unanimous. Those who have seen only one country of peasant properties, always think the inhabitants of that country the most industrious in the world. There is as little doubt among observers, with what feature in the condition of the peasantry this pre-eminent industry is connected. It is "the magic of property" which, in the words of Arthur Young, "turns sand into gold." The idea of property does not, however, necessarily imply that there should be no rent, any more than that there should be no taxes. It merely implies that the rent should be a fixed charge, not liable to be raised against the possessor by his own improvements, or by the will of a landlord. A tenant at a quit-rent is, to all intents and purposes, a proprietor; a copyholder is not less so than a freeholder. What is wanted is permanent possession on fixed terms. "Give a man the secure possession of a bleak rock, and he will turn it into a garden;

* *The Canton Schaffhausen* (before quoted), p. 53.

give him a nine years' lease of a garden, and he will convert it into a desert."

The details which have been cited, and those, still more minute, to be found in the same authorities, concerning the habitually elaborate system of cultivation, and the thousand devices of the peasant proprietor for making every superfluous hour and odd moment instrumental to some increase in the future produce and value of the land, will explain what has been said elsewhere* respecting the far larger gross produce which, with anything like parity of agricultural knowledge, is obtained, from the same quality of soil, on small farms, at least when they are the property of the cultivator. The treatise on "Flemish Husbandry" is especially instructive respecting the means by which untiring industry does more than outweigh inferiority of resources, imperfection of implements, and ignorance of scientific theories. The peasant cultivation of Flanders and Italy is affirmed to produce heavier crops, in equal circumstances of soil, than the best cultivated districts of Scotland and England. It produces them, no doubt, with an amount of labour which, if paid for by an employer, would make the cost to him more than equivalent to the benefit; but to the peasant it is not cost, it is the devotion of time which he can spare, to a favourite pursuit, if we should not rather say a ruling passion.†

We have seen, too, that it is not solely by superior exertion that

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* *Principles of Political Economy*, Book i. ch. ix. § 4.

† Read the graphic description by the historian Michelet, of the feelings of a peasant proprietor towards his land.

"If we would know the inmost thought, the passion, of the French peasant, it is very easy. Let us walk out on Sunday into the country and follow him. Behold him yonder, walking in front of us. It is two o'clock; his wife is at vespers; he has on his Sunday clothes; I perceive that he is going to visit his mistress.

"What mistress? His land.

"I do not say he goes straight to it. No, he is free to-day, and may either go or not. Does he not go every day in the week? Accordingly, he turns aside, he goes another way, he has business elsewhere. And yet—he goes.

"It is true, he was passing close by; it was an opportunity. He looks, but apparently he will not go in; what for? And yet—he enters.

"At least it is probable that he will not work; he is in his Sunday dress: he

the Flemish cultivators succeed in obtaining these brilliant results. The same motive which gives such intensity to their industry, placed them earlier in possession of an amount of agricultural knowledge, not attained until much later in countries where agriculture was carried on solely by hired labour. An equally high testimony is borne by M. de Lavergne* to the agricultural skill of the small proprietors in those parts of France to which the *petite culture* is really suitable. "In the rich plains of Flanders, on the banks of the Rhine, the Garonne, the Charente, the Rhone, all the practices which fertilize the land and increase the productiveness of labour are known to the very smallest cultivators, and practised by them, however considerable may be the advances which they require. In their hands, abundant manures, collected at great cost, repair and incessantly increase the fertility of the soil, in spite of the activity of cultivation. The races of cattle are superior, the crops magnificent. Tobacco, flax, colza, madder, beetroot, in some places; in others, the vine, the olive, the plum, the mulberry, only yield their abundant treasures to a population of industrious labourers. Is it not also to the *petite culture* that we are indebted for most of the garden produce obtained by dint of great outlay in the neighbourhood of Paris?"

§ 2. Another aspect of peasant properties, in which it is essential that they should be considered, is that of an instrument of popular education. Books and schooling are absolutely necessary to education; but not all-sufficient. The mental faculties will be most developed where they are most exercised; and what gives more

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has a clean shirt and blouse. Still, there is no harm in picking up the weed and throwing out that stone. There is a stump, too, which is in the way; but he has not his tools with him, he will do it to-morrow.

"Then he folds his arms and gazes, enjoys and exults. He gives a long, a very long look, and seems lost in thought. At last, if he thinks himself observed, if he sees a passer-by, he moves slowly away. Thirty paces off he stops, turns round, and casts on his land a last look, smiles and gesticulates, but to those who can see it, the look is full of passion, of heart, of devotion."—*The People*, by J. Michelet, Part I. ch. 1.

* *Essay on the Rural Economy of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, 2nd ed. p. 177.

exercise to them than the having a multitude of interests, none of which can be neglected, and which can be provided for only by varied efforts of will and intelligence? Some of the disparagers of small properties lay great stress on the cares and anxieties which beset the peasant proprietor of the Rhineland or Flanders. It is precisely those cares and anxieties which tend to make him a superior being to an English day-labourer. It is, to be sure, rather abusing the privileges of fair argument to represent the condition of a day-labourer as not an anxious one. I can conceive no circumstances in which he is free from anxiety, where there is a possibility of being out of employment; unless he has access to a profuse dispensation of parish pay, and no shame or reluctance in demanding it. The day-labourer has, in the existing state of society and population, many of the anxieties which have not an invigorating effect on the mind, and none of those which have. The position of the peasant proprietor of Flanders is the reverse. From the anxiety which chills and paralyses—the uncertainty of having food to eat—few persons are more exempt: it requires as rare a concurrence of circumstances as the potato failure combined with an universal bad harvest, to bring him within reach of that danger. His anxieties are the ordinary vicissitudes of more and less; his cares are that he takes his fair share of the business of life; that he is a free human being, and not perpetually a child, which seems to be the approved condition of the labouring classes according to the prevailing philanthropy. He is no longer a being of a different order from the middle classes; he has pursuits and objects like those which occupy them, and give to their intellects the greatest part of such cultivation as they receive. If there is a first principle in intellectual education, it is this—that the discipline which does good to the mind is that in which the mind is active, not that in which it is passive. The secret for developing the faculties is to give them much to do, and much inducement to do it. This detracts nothing from the importance, and even necessity, of other kinds of mental cultivation. The possession of property will not prevent the peasant from being coarse, selfish, and narrow-minded. These things depend on other influences, and other kinds

of instruction. But this great stimulus to one kind of mental activity, in no way impedes any other means of intellectual development. On the contrary, by cultivating the habit of turning to practical use every fragment of knowledge acquired, it helps to render that schooling and reading fruitful, which without some such auxiliary influence are in too many cases like seed thrown on a rock.

§ 3. It is not on the intelligence alone, that the situation of a peasant proprietor exercises an improving influence. It is no less propitious to the moral virtues of prudence, temperance, and self-control. Day-labourers, where the labouring class mainly consists of them, are usually improvident: they spend carelessly to the full extent of their means, and let the future shift for itself. This is so notorious, that many persons strongly interested in the welfare of the labouring classes, hold it as a fixed opinion that an increase of wages would do them little good, unless accompanied by at least a corresponding improvement in their tastes and habits. The tendency of peasant proprietors, and of those who hope to become proprietors, is to the contrary extreme; to take even too much thought for the morrow. They are oftener accused of penuriousness than of prodigality. They deny themselves reasonable indulgences, and live wretchedly in order to economise. In Switzerland almost everybody saves, who has any means of saving; the case of the Flemish farmers has been already noticed: among the French, though a pleasure-loving and reputed to be a self-indulgent people, the spirit of thrift is diffused through the rural population in a manner most gratifying as a whole, and which in individual instances errs rather on the side of excess than defect. Among those who, from the hovels in which they live, and the herbs and roots which constitute their diet, are mistaken by travellers for proofs and specimens of general indigence, there are numbers who have hoards in leathern bags, consisting of sums in five-franc pieces, which they keep by them perhaps for a whole generation, unless brought out to be expended in their most cherished gratification—the purchase of land. If there is a moral

inconvenience attached to a state of society in which the peasantry have land, it is the danger of their being too careful of their pecuniary concerns; of its making them crafty, and "calculating" in the objectionable sense. The French peasant is no simple countryman, no downright "peasant of the Danube;"* both in fact and in fiction he is now "the crafty peasant." That is the stage which he has reached in the progressive development which the constitution of things has imposed on human intelligence and human emancipation. But some excess in this direction is a small and a passing evil compared with recklessness and improvidence in the labouring classes, and a cheap price to pay for the inestimable worth of the virtue of self-dependence, as the general characteristic of a people: a virtue which is one of the first conditions of excellence in a human character—the stock on which if the other virtues are not grafted, they have seldom any firm root; a quality indispensable in the case of a labouring class, even to any tolerable degree of physical comfort; and by which the peasantry of France, and of most European countries of peasant proprietors, are distinguished beyond any other labouring population.

§ 4. Is it likely that a state of economical relations so conducive to frugality and prudence in every other respect, should be prejudicial to it in the cardinal point of increase of population? That it is so, is the opinion expressed by most of those English political economists who have written anything about the matter. Mr. M'Culloch's opinion is well known. Mr. Jones affirms,† that a "peasant population, raising their own wages from the soil, and consuming them in kind, are universally acted upon very feebly by internal checks, or by motives disposing them to restraint. The consequence is, that unless some external cause, quite independent of their will, forces such peasant cultivators to slacken their rate of increase, they will, in a limited territory, very rapidly approach a state of want and penury, and will be stopped at last

only by the physical impossibility of procuring subsistence." He elsewhere* speaks of such a peasantry as "exactly in the condition in which the animal disposition to increase their numbers is checked by the fewest of those balancing motives and desires which regulate the increase of superior ranks or more civilized people." The "causes of this peculiarity," Mr. Jones promised to point out in a subsequent work, which never made its appearance. I am totally unable to conjecture from what theory of human nature, and of the motives which influence human conduct, he would have derived them. Arthur Young assumes the same "peculiarity" as a fact; but, though not much in the habit of qualifying his opinions, he does not push his doctrine to so violent an extreme as Mr. Jones; having, as we have seen, himself testified to various instances in which peasant populations, such as Mr. Jones speaks of, were not tending to "a state of want and penury," and were in no danger whatever of coming in contact with "physical impossibility of procuring subsistence."

That there should be discrepancy of experience on this matter, is easily to be accounted for. Whether the labouring people live by land or by wages, they have always hitherto multiplied up to the limit set by their habitual standard of comfort. When that standard was low, not exceeding a scanty subsistence, the size of properties, as well as the rate of wages, has been kept down to what would barely support life. Extremely low ideas of what is necessary for subsistence, are perfectly compatible with peasant properties; and if a people have always been used to poverty, and habit has reconciled them to it, there will be over-population, and excessive subdivision of land. But this is not to the purpose. The true question is, supposing a peasantry to possess land not insufficient but sufficient for their comfortable support, are they more, or less, likely to fall from this state of comfort through improvident multiplication, than if they were living in an equally comfortable manner as hired labourers? All *à priori* considerations are in favour of their being less likely. The dependence of wages on population

* *Essay on the Distribution of Wealth*, p. 68.

is a matter of speculation and discussion. That wages would fall if population were much increased is often a matter of real doubt, and always a thing which requires some exercise of the thinking faculty for its intelligent recognition. But every peasant can satisfy himself from evidence which he can fully appreciate, whether his piece of land can be made to support several families in the same comfort in which it supports one. Few people like to leave to their children a worse lot in life than their own. The parent who has land to leave, is perfectly able to judge whether the children can live upon it or not: but people who are supported by wages, see no reason why their sons should be unable to support themselves in the same way, and trust accordingly to chance. "In even the most useful and necessary arts and manufactures," says Mr. Laing,* "the demand for labourers is not a seen, known, steady, and appreciable demand: but it is so in husbandry" under small properties. "The labour to be done, the subsistence that labour will produce out of his portion of land, are seen and known elements in a man's calculation upon his means of subsistence. Can his square of land, or can it not, subsist a family? Can he marry or not? are questions which every man can answer without delay, doubt, or speculation. It is the depending on chance, where judgment has nothing clearly set before it, that causes reckless, improvident marriages in the lower, as in the higher classes, and produces among us the evils of over-population; and chance necessarily enters into every man's calculations, when certainty is removed altogether; as it is, where certain subsistence is, by our distribution of property, the lot of but a small portion instead of about two-thirds of the people."

There never has been a writer more keenly sensible of the evils brought upon the labouring classes by excess of population, than Sismondi, and this is one of the grounds of his earnest advocacy of peasant properties. He had ample opportunity, in more countries than one, for judging of their effect on population. Let us see his testimony. "In the countries in which cultivation by small pro-

prietors still continues, population increases regularly and rapidly until it has attained its natural limits; that is to say, inheritances continue to be divided and subdivided among several sons, as long as, by an increase of labour, each family can extract an equal income from a smaller portion of land. A father who possessed a vast extent of natural pasture, divides it among his sons, and they turn it into fields and meadows; his sons divide it among their sons, who abolish fallows: each improvement in agricultural knowledge admits of another step in the subdivision of property. But there is no danger lest the proprietor should bring up his children to make beggars of them. He knows exactly what inheritance he has to leave them; he knows that the law will divide it equally among them; he sees the limit beyond which this division would make them descend from the rank which he has himself filled, and a just family pride, common to the peasant and to the nobleman, makes him abstain from summoning into life, children for whom he cannot properly provide. If more are born, at least they do not marry, or they agree among themselves, which of several brothers shall perpetuate the family. It is not found that in the Swiss Cantons, the patrimonies of the peasants are ever so divided as to reduce them below an honourable competence; though the habit of foreign service, by opening to the children a career indefinite and uncalculable, sometimes calls forth a superabundant population."*

There is similar testimony respecting Norway. Though there is no law or custom of primogeniture, and no manufactures to take off a surplus population, the subdivision of property is not carried to an injurious extent. "The division of the land among children," says Mr. Laing,† "appears not, during the thousand years it has been in operation, to have had the effect of reducing the landed properties to the minimum size that will barely support human existence. I have counted from five-and-twenty to forty cows upon farms, and that in a country in which the farmer must, for at least

* *Nouveaux Principes*, Book iii. ch. 3.
† *Residence in Norway*, p. 18.

seven months in the year, have winter provender and houses provided for all the cattle. It is evident that some cause or other, operating on aggregation of landed property, counteracts the dividing effects of partition among children. That cause can be no other than what I have long conjectured would be effective in such a social arrangement; viz., that in a country where land is held, not in tenancy merely, as in Ireland, but in full ownership, its aggregation by the deaths of co-heirs, and by the marriages of the female heirs among the body of landholders, will balance its subdivision by the equal succession of children. The whole mass of property will, I conceive, be found in such a state of society to consist of as many estates of the class of 1000*l.*, as many of 100*l.*, as many of 10*l.*, a year, at one period as at another." That this should happen, supposes diffused through society a very efficacious prudential check to population; and it is reasonable to give part of the credit of this prudential restraint to the peculiar adaptation of the peasant-proprietary system for fostering it.

"In some parts of Switzerland," says Mr. Kay,* "as in the canton of Argovie for instance, a peasant never marries before he attains the age of twenty-five years, and generally much later in life; and in that canton the women very seldom marry before they have attained the age of thirty. . . . Nor do the division of land and the cheapness of the mode of conveying it from one man to another, encourage the providence of the labourers of the rural districts only. They act in the same manner, though perhaps in a less degree, upon the labourers of the smaller towns. In the smaller provincial towns it is customary for a labourer to own a small plot of ground outside the town. This plot he cultivates in the evening as his kitchen garden. He raises in it vegetables and fruits for the use of his family during the winter. After his day's work is over, he and his family repair to the garden for a short time, which they spend in planting, sowing, weeding, or preparing for sowing or harvest, according to the season. The desire to become possessed

of one of these gardens operates very strongly in strengthening prudential habits and in restraining improvident marriages. Some of the manufacturers in the canton of Argovie told me that a townsman was seldom contented until he had bought a garden, or a garden and house, and that the town labourers generally deferred their marriages for some years, in order to save enough to purchase either one or both of these luxuries."

The same writer shows by statistical evidence* that in Prussia the average age of marriage is not only much later than in England, but "is gradually becoming later than it was formerly," while at the same time "fewer illegitimate children are born in Prussia than in any other of the European countries." "Wherever I travelled," says Mr. Kay,† "in North Germany and Switzerland, I was assured by all that the desire to obtain land, which was felt by all the peasants, was acting as the strongest possible check upon undue increase of population."‡

In Flanders, according to Mr. Fauche, the British Consul at Ostend,§ "farmers' sons and those who have the means to become farmers will delay their marriage until they get possession of a farm." Once a farmer, the next object is to become a proprietor. "The first thing a Dane does with his savings," says Mr. Browne, the Consul at Copenhagen,‖ "is to purchase a clock, then a horse

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* Vol. i. pp. 75-9. † Ibid. p. 90.

‡ The Prussian minister of statistics, in a work (*Condition of the People in Prussia*) which I am obliged to quote at second hand from Mr. Kay, after proving by figures the great and progressive increase of the consumption of food and clothing per head of the population, from which he justly infers a corresponding increase of the productiveness of agriculture, continues: "The division of estates has, since 1831, proceeded more and more throughout the country. There are now many more small independent proprietors than formerly. Yet, however many complaints of pauperism are heard among the dependent labourers, we never hear it complained that pauperism is increasing among the peasant proprietors."—Kay, i. 262-6.

§ In a communication to the Commissioners of Poor Law Enquiry, p. 640 of their Foreign Communications, Appendix F to their First Report.

‖ Ibid. 268.

and cow, which he hires out, and which pays a good interest. Then his ambition is to become a petty proprietor, and this class of persons is better off than any in Denmark. Indeed, I know of no people in any country who have more easily within their reach all that is really necessary for life than this class, which is very large in comparison with that of labourers."

But the experience which most decidedly contradicts the asserted tendency of peasant proprietorship to produce excess of population, is the case of France. In that country the experiment is not tried in the most favourable circumstances, a large proportion of the properties being too small. The number of landed proprietors in France is not exactly ascertained, but on no estimate does it fall much short of five millions; which, on the lowest calculation of the number of persons of a family (and for France it ought to be a low calculation), shows much more than half the population as either possessing, or entitled to inherit, landed property. A majority of the properties are so small as not to afford a subsistence to the proprietors, of whom, according to some computations, as many as three millions are obliged to eke out their means of support either by working for hire, or by taking additional land, generally on metayer tenure. When the property possessed is not sufficient to relieve the possessor from dependence on wages, the condition of a proprietor loses much of its characteristic efficacy as a check to over-population: and if the prediction so often made in England had been realized, and France had become a "pauper warren," the experiment would have proved nothing against the tendencies of the same system of agricultural economy in other circumstances. But what is the fact? That the rate of increase of the French population is the slowest in Europe. During the generation which the Revolution raised from the extreme of hopeless wretchedness to sudden abundance, a great increase of population took place. But a generation has grown up, which, having been born in improved circumstances, has not learnt to be miserable; and upon them the spirit of thrift operates most conspicuously, in keeping the increase of population within the increase of national wealth. In a table,

drawn up by Professor Rau,* of the rate of annual increase of the populations of various countries, that of France, from 1817 to 1827, is stated at $\frac{63}{100}$ per cent, that of England during a similar decennial

* The following is the table (see p. 168 of the Belgian translation of Mr. Rau's large work):

		Per cent.			Per cent.
United States	1820-30	2·92	Scotland	1821-31	1·30
Hungary (according to Rohrer)		2·40	Saxony	1815-30	1·15
England	1811-21	1·78	Baden	1820-30 (Heunisch)	1·13
„	1821-31	1·60	Bavaria	1814-28	1·08
Austria (Rohrer)		1·30	Naples	1814-24	0·83
Prussia	1816-27	1·54	France	1817-27 (Mathieu)	0·63
„	1820-30	1·37	and more recently (Moreau de Jonnès)		0·55
„	1821-31	1·27			
Netherlands	1821-28	1·28			

But the number given by Moreau de Jonnès, he adds, is not entitled to implicit confidence.

The following table given by M. Quetelet (*On Man and the Development of his Faculties*, vol. i. ch. 7), also on the authority of Rau, contains additional matter, and differs in some items from the preceding, probably from the author's having taken, in those cases, an average of different years:

	Per cent.		Per cent.		Per cent.
Ireland	2·45	Rhenish Prussia	1·33	Naples	0·83
Hungary	2·40	Austria	1·30	France	0·63
Spain	1·66	Bavaria	1·08	Sweden	0·58
England	1·65	Netherlands	0·94	Lombardy	0·45

A very carefully prepared statement, by M. Legoyt, in the *Journal des Economistes* for May 1847, which brings up the results for France to the census of the preceding year 1846, is summed up in the following table:

	According to the census.	According to the excess of births over deaths.		According to the census.	According to the excess of births over deaths.
	per cent.	per cent.		per cent.	per cent.
Sweden	0·83	1·14	Wurtemburg	0·01	1·00
Norway	1·36	1·30	Holland	0·90	1·03
Denmark	...	0·95	Belgium	...	0·76
Russia	...	0·61	Sardinia	1·08	...
Austria	0·85	0·90	Great Britain (exclusive of Ireland)	1·95	1·00
Prussia	1·84	1·18			
Saxony	1·45	0·90			
Hanover	...	0·85	France	0·68	0·50
Bavaria	...	0·71	United States	3·27	...

period being $1\frac{6}{10}$ annually, and that of the United States nearly 3. According to the official returns as analysed by M. Legoyt,* the increase of the population, which from 1801 to 1806 was at the rate of 1·28 per cent annually, averaged only 0·47 per cent from 1806 to 1831; from 1831 to 1836 it averaged 0·60 per cent; from 1836 to 1841, 0·41 per cent, and from 1841 to 1846, 0·68 per cent.† At the census of 1851 the rate of annual increase shown was only 1·08 per cent in the five years, or 0·21 annually; and at the census of 1856 only 0·71 per cent in five years, or 0·14 annually: so that, in the words of M. de Lavergne, "population has almost ceased to increase in France."‡ Even this slow increase is wholly the effect of a diminution of deaths; the number of births not increasing at all, while the proportion of the births to the population is constantly diminishing.§ This slow growth of the

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* *Journal des Economistes* for March and May 1847.

† M. Legoyt is of opinion that the population was understated in 1841, and the increase between that time and 1846 consequently overstated, and that the real increase during the whole period was something intermediate between the last two averages, or not much more than one in two hundred.

‡ *Journal des Economistes* for February 1847. In the Journal for January 1865, M. Legoyt gives some of the numbers slightly altered, and I presume corrected. The series of percentages is 1·28, 0·31, 0·69, 0·60, 0·41, 0·68, 0·22, and 0·20. The last census, that of 1861, shows a slight reaction, the percentage, independently of the newly acquired departments, being 0·32.

§ The following are the numbers given by M. Legoyt:

From 1824 to 1828	annual number of births.	981,914,	being	1 in 32·30	of the population.
„ 1829 to 1833	„	965,444,	„	1 in 34·00	
„ 1834 to 1838	„	972,993,	„	1 in 34·39	
„ 1839 to 1843	„	970,617,	„	1 in 35·27	
„ 1844 and 1845	„	983,573,	„	1 in 35·58	

In the last two years the births, according to M. Legoyt, were swelled by the effects of considerable immigration. "This diminution of births," he observes, "while there is a constant, though not a rapid increase both of population and of marriages, can only be attributed to the progress of prudence and forethought in families. It was a foreseen consequence of our civil and social institutions, which, producing a daily increasing subdivision of fortunes, both landed and moveable, call forth in our people the instincts of conservation and of comfort."

In four departments, among which are two of the most thriving in Normandy, the deaths even then exceeded the births. The census of 1856 exhibits

numbers of the people, while capital increases much more rapidly, has caused a noticeable improvement in the condition of the labouring class. The circumstances of that portion of the class who are landed proprietors are not easily ascertained with precision, being of course extremely variable; but the mere labourers, who derived no direct benefit from the changes in landed property which took place at the Revolution, have unquestionably much improved in condition since that period.* Dr. Rau testifies to a similar fact in the case

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the remarkable fact of a positive diminution in the population of 54 out of the 86 departments. A significant comment on the pauper-warren theory. See M. de Lavergne's analysis of the returns.

* "The classes of our population which have only wages, and are therefore the most exposed to indigence, are now (1846) much better provided with the necessaries of food, lodging, and clothing, than they were at the beginning of the century. This may be proved by the testimony of all persons who can remember the earlier of the two periods compared. Were there any doubts on the subject, they might easily be dissipated by consulting old cultivators and workmen, as I have myself done in various localities, without meeting with a single contrary testimony; we may also appeal to the facts collected by an accurate observer, M. Villermé, in his Picture of the Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes, book ii. ch. 1." (*Researches on the Causes of Indigence*, by A. Clément, pp. 84-5.) The same writer speaks (p. 118) of "the considerable rise which has taken place since 1789 in the wages of agricultural day-labourers;" and adds the following evidence of a higher standard of habitual requirements, even in that portion of the town population, the state of which is usually represented as most deplorable. "In the last fifteen or twenty years a considerable change has taken place in the habits of the operatives in our manufacturing towns: they now expend much more than formerly on clothing and ornament. . . Certain classes of workpeople, such as the *canuts* of Lyons," (according to all representations, like their counterpart, our handloom weavers, the very worst paid class of artizans,) "no longer show themselves, as they did formerly, covered with filthy rags." (Page 164.)

The preceding statements were given in former editions of the "Principles of Political Economy," being the best to which I had at the time access; but evidence, both of a more recent, and of a more minute and precise character, will now be found in the important work of M. Léonce de Lavergne, *Rural Economy of France since* 1789. According to that pains-taking, well-informed, and most impartial enquirer, the average daily wages of a French labourer have risen, since the commencement of the Revolution, in the ratio of 19 to 30, while, owing to the more constant employment, the total earnings have increased in a still greater ratio, not short of double. The following are the statements of M. de Lavergne (2nd ed. p. 57):

"Arthur Young estimates at 19 sous [9½*d.*] the average of a day's wages, which must now be about 1 franc 50 centimes [1*s.* 3*d.*], and this increase only

of another country in which the subdivision of the land is probably excessive, the Palatinate.*

I am not aware of a single authentic instance which supports the assertion that rapid multiplication is promoted by peasant properties. Instances may undoubtedly be cited of its not being prevented by them, and one of the principal of these is Belgium; the prospects of which, in respect to population, are at present a matter of considerable uncertainty. Belgium has the most rapidly increasing population on the Continent; and when the circumstances of the country require, as they must soon do, that this rapidity should be checked, there will be a considerable strength of existing habit to

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represents a part of the improvement. Though the rural population has remained about the same in numbers, the addition made to the population since 1789 having centred in the towns, the number of actual working days has increased, first because, the duration of life having augmented, the number of able-bodied men is greater, and next, because labour is better organized, partly through the suppression of several festival-holidays, partly by the mere effect of a more active demand. When we take into account the increased number of his working days, the annual receipts of the rural workman must have doubled. This augmentation of wages answers to at least an equal augmentation of comforts, since the prices of the chief necessaries of life have changed but little, and those of manufactured, for example of woven, articles, have materially diminished. The lodging of the labourers has also improved, if not in all, at least in most of our provinces."

M. de Lavergne's estimate of the average amount of a day's wages is grounded on a careful comparison, in this and all other economical points of view, of all the different provinces of France.

* In his little book on the Agriculture of the Palatinate, already cited. He says that the daily wages of labour, which during the last years of the war were unusually high, and so continued until 1817, afterwards sank to a lower money-rate, but that the prices of many commodities having fallen in a still greater proportion, the condition of the people was unequivocally improved. The food given to farm labourers by their employers has also greatly improved in quantity and quality. "It is now considerably better than about forty years ago, when the poorer class obtained less flesh-meat and puddings, and no cheese, butter, and the like." (p. 20.) "Such an increase of wages" (adds the Professor) "which must be estimated not in money, but in the quantity of necessaries and conveniences which the labourer is enabled to procure, is by universal admission, a proof that the mass of capital must have increased." It proves not only this, but also that the labouring population has not increased in an equal degree; and that in this instance as well as in France, the division of the land, even when excessive, has been compatible with a strengthening of the prudential checks to population.

be broken through. One of the unfavourable circumstances is the great power possessed over the minds of the people by the Catholic priesthood, whose influence is everywhere strongly exerted against restraining population. As yet, however, it must be remembered that the indefatigable industry and great agricultural skill of the people have rendered the existing rapidity of increase practically innocuous; the great number of large estates still undivided affording by their gradual dismemberment, a resource for the necessary augmentation of the gross produce; and there are, besides, many large manufacturing towns, and mining and coal districts, which attract and employ a considerable portion of the annual increase of population.

§ 5. But even where peasant properties are accompanied by an excess of numbers, this evil is not necessarily attended with the additional economical disadvantage of too great a subdivision of the land. It does not follow because landed property is minutely divided, that farms will be so. As large properties are perfectly compatible with small farms, so are small properties with farms of an adequate size; and a subdivision of occupancy is not an inevitable consequence of even undue multiplication among peasant proprietors. As might be expected from their admirable intelligence in things relating to their occupation, the Flemish peasantry have long learnt this lesson. "The habit of not dividing properties," says Dr. Rau,* "and the opinion that this is advantageous, have been so completely preserved in Flanders, that even now, when a peasant dies leaving several children, they do not think of dividing his patrimony, though it be neither entailed nor settled in trust; they prefer selling it entire, and sharing the proceeds, considering it as a jewel which loses its value when it is divided." That the same feeling must prevail widely even in France, is shown by the great frequency of sales of land, amounting in ten years to a fourth part of the whole soil of the country: and M. Passy, in his tract

* Page 334 of the Brussels translation. He cites as an authority, Schwerz, *Papers on Agriculture*, i. 185.

"On the Changes in the Agricultural Condition of the Department of the Eure since the year 1800,"* states other facts tending to the same conclusion. "The example," says he, "of this department attests that there does not exist, as some writers have imagined, between the distribution of property and that of cultivation a connexion which tends invincibly to assimilate them. In the portion of it have changes of ownership had a perceptible influence on the size of holdings. While, in districts of small farming, lands belonging to the same owner are ordinarily distributed among many [illegible], so [illegible] in places where the [illegible] [illegible], for the same object to treat the lands of several [illegible]. In the plains of Vexin in particular, many [illegible] of the cultivators of the soil content themselves with a single farm, [illegible] the lands of their principal holding, in those in the neighbourhood which they are able to take, and in this manner [illegible] a vast extent which in some cases reaches 2 thousand [illegible] two hundred English acres. The more [illegible] are distinguished by the name [illegible] in this way [illegible] gentlemen farmers. This is very favourable to the interests [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

Nord, the Somme, the Pas de Calais, the Seine Inférieure, the Aisne, and the Oise; all of them among the richest and best cultivated, and the first-mentioned of them the very richest and best cultivated, in France.

Undue subdivision, and excessive smallness of holdings, are undoubtedly a prevalent evil in some countries of peasant proprietors, and particularly in parts of Germany and France. The governments of Bavaria and Nassau have thought it necessary to impose a legal limit to subdivision, and the Prussian Government unsuccessfully proposed the same measure to the Estates of its Rhenish Provinces. But I do not think it will anywhere be found that the *petite culture* is the system of the peasants, and the *grande culture* that of the great landlords: on the contrary, wherever the small properties are divided among too many proprietors, I believe it to be true that the large properties also are parcelled out among too many farmers, and that the cause is the same in both cases, a backward state of capital, skill, and agricultural enterprise. There is reason to believe that the subdivision in France is not more excessive than is accounted for by this cause; that it is diminishing, not increasing; and that the terror expressed in some quarters, at the progress of the *morcellement*, is one of the most groundless of real or pretended panics.*

If peasant properties have any effect in promoting subdivision beyond the degree which corresponds to the agricultural practices

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passages of the same important treatise: which, on the other hand, equally abounds with evidence of the mischievous effect of subdivision when too minute, or when the nature of the soil and of its products is not suitable to it.

* Mr. Laing, in his latest publication, "Observations on the Social and Political State of the European People in 1848 and 1849," a book devoted to the glorification of England, and the disparagement of everything elsewhere which others, or even he himself in former works, had thought worthy of praise, argues that "although the land itself is not divided and subdivided" on the death of the proprietor, "the value of the land is, and with effects almost as prejudicial to social progress. The value of each share becomes a debt or burden upon the land." Consequently the condition of the agricultural population is retrograde; "each generation is worse off than the preceding one, although the land is neither less nor more divided, nor worse cultivated." And this he gives as the explanation of the great indebtedness of the small landed proprietors in France (pp. 97-9). If these statements were correct, they would invalidate all which Mr. Laing affirmed so positively in other writings, and

of the country, and which is customary on its large estates, the cause must lie in one of the salutary influences of the system; the eminent degree in which it promotes providence on the part of those who, not being yet peasant proprietors, hope to become so. In England, where the agricultural labourer has no investment for his savings but the savings bank, and no position to which he can rise by any exercise of economy, except perhaps that of a petty shopkeeper, with its chances of bankruptcy, there is nothing at all resembling the intense spirit of thrift which takes possession of one who, from being a day labourer, can raise himself by saving to the condition of a landed proprietor. According to almost all authorities, the real cause of the minute subdivision is the higher price which can be obtained for land by selling it to the peasantry, as an investment for their small accumulations, than by disposing of it entire to some rich purchaser who has no object but to live on its income, without improving it. The hope of obtaining such an investment is the most powerful of inducements, to those who are without land, to practise the industry, frugality, and self-restraint, on which their success in this object of ambition is dependent.

As the result of this enquiry into the direct operation and indirect influences of peasant properties, I conceive it to be established, that there is no necessary connexion between this form of landed property and an imperfect state of the arts of production; that it

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repeats in this, respecting the peculiar efficacy of the possession of land in preventing over-population. But he is entirely mistaken as to the matter of fact. In the only country of which he speaks from actual residence, Norway, he does not pretend that the condition of the peasant proprietors is deteriorating. The facts already cited prove that in respect to Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland, the assertion is equally wide of the mark; and what has been shown respecting the slow increase of population in France, demonstrates that if the condition of the French peasantry was deteriorating, it could not be from the cause supposed by Mr. Laing. The truth I believe to be that in every country without exception, in which peasant properties prevail, the condition of the people is improving, the produce of the land and even its fertility increasing, and from the larger surplus which remains after feeding the agricultural classes, the towns are augmenting both in population and in the well-being of their inhabitants. On this question, as well as on that of the subdivision, so far as regards France, additional facts and observations, brought up to a later date, will be found in the Appendix to the first volume of "Principles of Political Economy."

is favourable in quite as many respects as it is unfavourable, to the most effective use of the powers of the soil; that no other existing state of agricultural economy has so beneficial an effect on the industry, the intelligence, the frugality, and prudence of the population, nor tends on the whole so much to discourage an improvident increase of their numbers; and that no existing state, therefore, is on the whole so favourable, both to their moral and their physical welfare. Compared with the English system of cultivation by hired labour, it must be regarded as eminently beneficial to the labouring class.* We are not on the present occasion called upon to compare it with the joint ownership of the land by associations of labourers.

* French history strikingly confirms these conclusions. Three times during the course of ages the peasantry have been purchasers of land; and these times immediately preceded the three principal eras of French agricultural prosperity.

"In the worst times," says the historian Michelet (*The People*, Part i. ch. 1), "the times of universal poverty, when even the rich are poor and obliged to sell, the poor are enabled to buy: no other purchaser presenting himself, the peasant in rags arrives with his piece of gold, and acquires a little bit of land. These moments of disaster in which the peasant was able to buy land at a low price, have always been followed by a sudden gush of prosperity which people could not account for. Towards 1500, for example, when France, exhausted by Louis XI., seemed to be completing its ruin in Italy, the noblesse who went to the wars were obliged to sell: the land, passing into new hands, suddenly began to flourish; men began to labour and to build. This happy moment, in the style of courtly historians, was called *the good Louis XII.*

"Unhappily it did not last long. Scarcely had the land recovered itself when the tax-collector fell upon it; the wars of religion followed, and seemed to rase everything to the ground; with horrible miseries, dreadful famines, in which mothers devoured their children. Who would believe that the country recovered from this? Scarcely is the war ended, when from the devastated fields, and the cottages still black with the flames, comes forth the hoard of the peasant. He buys; in ten years, France wears a new face; in twenty or thirty, all possessions have doubled and trebled in value. This moment, again baptized by a royal name, is called *the good Henry IV.* and *the great Richelieu.*"

Of the third era it is needless again to speak: it was that of the Revolution.

Whoever would study the reverse of the picture, may compare these historic periods, characterized by the dismemberment of large and the construction of small properties, with the wide-spread national suffering which accompanied, and the permanent deterioration of the condition of the labouring classes which followed, the "clearing" away of small yeomen to make room for large grazing farms, which was the grand economical event of English history during the sixteenth century.

OF METAYERS.

§ 1. From the case in which the produce of land and labour belongs undividedly to the labourer, we proceed to the cases in which it is divided, but between two classes only, the labourers and the landowners: the character of capitalists merging in the one or the other, as the case may be. It is possible indeed to conceive that there might be only two classes of persons to share the produce, and that a class of capitalists might be one of them; the character of labourer and that of landowner being united to form the other. This might occur in two ways. The labourers, though owning the land, might let it to a tenant, and work under him as hired servants. But this arrangement, even in the very rare cases which could give rise to it, would not require any particular discussion, since it would not differ in any material respect from the threefold system of labourers, capitalists, and landlords. The other case is the not uncommon one, in which a peasant proprietor owns and cultivates the land, but raises the little capital required, by a mortgage upon it. Neither does this case present any important peculiarity. There is but one person, the peasant himself, who has any right or power of interference in the management. He pays a fixed annuity as interest to a capitalist, as he pays another fixed sum in taxes to the government. Without dwelling further on these cases, we pass to those which present marked features of peculiarity.

When the two parties sharing in the produce are the labourer or labourers and the landowner, it is not a very material circumstance in the case, which of the two furnishes the stock, or whether, as sometimes happens, they furnish it, in a determinate proportion, between them. The essential difference does not lie in this, but in another circumstance, namely, whether the division of the produce between the two is regulated by custom or by competition. We will begin with the former case; of which the metayer culture is the principal, and in Europe almost the sole, example.

The principle of the metayer system, is that the labourer, or peasant, makes his engagement directly with the landowner, and pays, not a fixed rent, either in money or in kind, but a certain proportion of the produce, or rather of what remains of the produce after deducting what is considered necessary to keep up the stock. The proportion is usually, as the name imports, one-half; but in several districts in Italy it is two-thirds. Respecting the supply of stock, the custom varies from place to place; in some places the landlord furnishes the whole, in others half, in others some particular part, as for instance the cattle and seed, the labourer providing the implements.* "This connexion," says Sismondi, speaking chiefly of Tuscany,† "is often the subject of a contract, to define

* In France before the Revolution, according to Arthur Young (i. 403) there was great local diversity in this respect. In Champagne "the landlord commonly finds half the cattle and half the seed, and the metayer, labour, implements, and taxes; but in some districts the landlord bears a share of these. In Roussillon, the landlord pays half the taxes; and in Guienne, from Auch to Fleuran, many landlords pay all. Near Aguillon, on the Garonne, the metayers furnish half the cattle. At Nangis, in the Isle of France, I met with an agreement for the landlord to furnish live stock, implements, harness, and taxes; the metayer found labour and his own capitation tax: the landlord repaired the house and gates; the metayer the windows: the landlord provided seed the first year, the metayer the last; in the intervening years they supply half and half. In the Bourbonnois the landlord finds all sorts of live stock, yet the metayer sells, changes, and buys at his will; the steward keeping an account of these mutations, for the landlord has half the product of sales, and pays half the purchases." In Piedmont, he says, "the landlord commonly pays the taxes and repairs the buildings, and the tenant provides cattle, implements, and seed." (II. 151.)

† *Studies in Political Economy*, Essay VI. On the Condition of the Cultivators in Tuscany.

certain services and certain occasional payments to which the metayer binds himself; nevertheless the differences in the obligations of one such contract and another are inconsiderable; usage governs alike all these engagements, and supplies the stipulations which have not been expressed; and the landlord who attempted to depart from usage, who exacted more than his neighbour, who took for the basis of the agreement anything but the equal division of the crops, would render himself so odious, he would be so sure of not obtaining a metayer who was an honest man, that the contract of all the metayers may be considered as identical, at least in each province, and never gives rise to any competition among peasants in search of employment, or any offer to cultivate the soil on cheaper terms than one another." To the same effect Châteauvieux,* speaking of the metayers of Piedmont. "They consider it," (the farm) "as a patrimony, and never think of renewing the lease, but go on from generation to generation, on the same terms, without writings or registries."†

§ 2. When the partition of the produce is a matter of fixed usage, not of varying convention, political economy has no laws of distribution to investigate. It has only to consider, as in the case of peasant proprietors, the effects of the system first on the condition of the peasantry, morally and physically, and secondly, on the efficiency of the labour. In both these particulars the metayer system has the characteristic advantages of peasant properties, but has them in a less degree. The metayer has less motive to exertion than the peasant proprietor, since only half the fruits of his

* *Letters from Italy.* I quote from Dr. Rigby's translation (p. 22).

† This virtual fixity of tenure is not however universal even in Italy; and it is to its absence that Sismondi attributes the inferior condition of the metayers in some provinces of Naples, in Lucca, and in the Riviera of Genoa; where the landlords obtain a larger (though still a fixed) share of the produce. In those countries the cultivation is splendid, but the people wretchedly poor. "The same misfortune would probably have befallen the people of Tuscany if public opinion did not protect the cultivator; but a proprietor would not dare to impose conditions unusual in the country, and even in changing one metayer for another he alters nothing in the terms of the engagement." *New Principles of Political Economy*, book iii. ch. 5.

industry, instead of the whole, are his own. But he has a much stronger motive than a day labourer, who has no other interest in the result than not to be dismissed. If the metayer cannot be turned out except for some violation of his contract, he has a stronger motive to exertion than any tenant farmer who has not a lease. The metayer is at least his landlord's partner, and a half-sharer in their joint gains. Where, too, the permanence of his tenure is guaranteed by custom, he acquires local attachments, and much of the feelings of a proprietor. I am supposing that this half produce is sufficient to yield him a comfortable support. Whether it is so, depends (in any given state of agriculture) on the degree of subdivision of the land; which depends on the operation of the population principle. A multiplication of people, beyond the number that can be properly supported on the land or taken off by manufactures, is incident even to a peasant proprietary. and of course not less but rather more incident to a metayer population. The tendency, however, which we noticed in the proprietary system, to promote prudence on this point, is in no small degree common to it with the metayer system. There, also, it is a matter of easy and exact calculation whether a family can be supported or not. If it is easy to see whether the owner of the whole produce can increase the production so as to maintain a greater number of persons equally well, it is a not less simple problem whether the owner of half the produce can do so.* There is one check which this system seems to offer, over and above those held out even by the proprietary system; there is a landlord, who may exert a controlling power, by

* M. Bastiat affirms that even in France, incontestably the least favourable example of the metayer system, its effect in repressing population is conspicuous. "It is a well-ascertained fact that the tendency to excessive multiplication is chiefly manifested in the class who live on wages. Over these the forethought which retards marriages has little operation, because the evils which flow from excessive competition appear to them only very confusedly, and at a considerable distance. It is, therefore, the most advantageous condition of a people to be so organized as to contain no regular class of labourers for hire. In metayer countries, marriages are principally determined by the demands of cultivation; they increase when, from whatever cause, the metairies offer vacancies injurious to

refusing his consent to a subdivision. I do not, however, attach great importance to this check, because the farm may be loaded with superfluous hands without being subdivided; and because, so long as the increase of hands increases the gross produce, which is almost always the case, the landlord, who receives half the produce, is an immediate gainer, the inconvenience falling only on the labourers. The landlord is no doubt liable in the end to suffer from their poverty, by being forced to make advances to them, especially in bad seasons; and a foresight of this ultimate inconvenience may operate beneficially on such landlords as prefer future security to present profit.

The characteristic disadvantage of the metayer system is very fairly stated by Adam Smith. After pointing out that metayers "have a plain interest that the whole produce should be as great as possible, in order that their own proportion may be so," he continues,* "it could never, however, be the interest of this species of cultivators to lay out, in the further improvement of the land, any part of the little stock which they might save from their own share of the produce, because the lord who laid out nothing, was to get one-half of whatever it produced. The tithe, which is but a tenth of the produce, is found to be a very great hindrance to improvement. A tax, therefore, which amounted to one-half, must have been an effectual bar to it. It might be the interest of a metayer to make the land produce as much as could be brought out of it by means of the stock furnished by the proprietor; but it could never be his interest to mix any part of his own with it. In France, where five parts out of six of the whole kingdom are said to be still occupied by this species of cultivators, the proprietors complain that their metayers take every opportunity of employing

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production; they diminish when the places are filled up. A fact easily ascertained, the proportion between the size of the farm and the number of hands, [illegible] like forethought, and with greater effect. We find, accordingly, that [illegible] make an opening for a superfluous population, numbers [illegible] northern departments." *Considerations on*

the master's cattle rather in carriage than in cultivation; because in the one case they get the whole profits to themselves, in the other they share them with their landlord."

It is indeed implied in the very nature of the tenure, that all improvements which require expenditure of capital must be made with the capital of the landlord. This, however, is essentially the case even in England, whenever the farmers are tenants-at-will: or (if Arthur Young is right) even on a "nine years lease." If the landlord is willing to provide capital for improvements, the metayer has the strongest interest in promoting them, since half the benefit of them will accrue to himself. As however the perpetuity of tenure which, in the case we are discussing, he enjoys by custom, renders his consent a necessary condition; the spirit of routine, and dislike of innovation, characteristic of an agricultural people when not corrected by education, are no doubt, as the advocates of the system seem to admit, a serious hindrance to improvement.

§ 3. The metayer system has met with no mercy from English authorities. "There is not one word to be said in favour of the practice," says Arthur Young,* and a "thousand arguments that might be used against it. The hard plea of necessity can alone be urged in its favour; the poverty of the farmers being so great, that the landlord must stock the farm, or it could not be stocked at all: this is a most cruel burthen to a proprietor, who is thus obliged to run much of the hazard of farming in the most dangerous of all methods, that of trusting his property absolutely in the hands of people who are generally ignorant, many careless, and some undoubtedly wicked. . . . In this most miserable of all the modes of letting land, the defrauded landlord receives a contemptible rent; the farmer is in the lowest state of poverty; the land is miserably cultivated; and the nation suffers as severely as the parties themselves. . . . Wherever† this system prevails, it may be taken for granted that a useless and miserable population is

* *Travels*, vol. i. pp. 404-5. † Ibid. vol. ii. 151-3.

found. . . . Wherever the country (that I saw) is poor and unwatered, in the Milanese, it is in the hands of metayers:" they are almost always in debt to their landlord for seed or food, and "their condition is more wretched than that of a day labourer. . . . There* are but few districts" (in Italy) "where lands are let to the occupying tenant at a money-rent; but wherever it is found, their crops are greater; a clear proof of the imbecility of the metaying system." "Wherever it" (the metayer system) "has been adopted," says Mr. M'Culloch,† "it has put a stop to all improvement, and has reduced the cultivators to the most abject poverty." Mr. Jones‡ shares the common opinion, and quotes Turgot and Destutt-Tracy in support of it. The impression, however, of all these writers (notwithstanding Arthur Young's occasional references to Italy) seems to be chiefly derived from France, and France before the Revolution.§ Now the situation of French metayers under the old régime by no means represents the typical form of the contract. It is essential to that form, that the proprietor pays all the taxes. But in France the exemption of the noblesse from direct taxation had led the Government to throw the whole burthen of their ever-increasing fiscal exactions upon the occupiers: and it is to these exactions that Turgot ascribed the extreme wretchedness of the metayers: a wretchedness in some cases so excessive, that in Limousin and Angoumois (the provinces which he administered)

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* *Travels*, vol. ii. 217.

† *Principles of Political Economy*, 3rd ed. p. 471.

‡ *Essay on the Distribution of Wealth*, pp. 102-4.

§ M. de Tracy is partially an exception, inasmuch as his experience reaches lower down than the revolutionary period; but he admits (as Mr. Jones has himself stated in another place) that he is acquainted only with a limited district, of great subdivision and unfertile soil.

M. Passy is of opinion, that a French peasantry must be in indigence and the country badly cultivated on a metayer system, because the proportion of the produce claimable by the landlord is too high; it being only in more favourable climates that any land, not of the most exuberant fertility, can pay half its gross produce in rent, and leave enough to peasant farmers to enable them to grow successfully the more expensive and valuable products of agriculture. (*On Systems of Culture*, p. 35.) This is an objection only to a particular numerical proportion, which is indeed the common one, but is not essential to the system.

they had seldom more, according to him, after deducting all burthens, than from twenty-five to thirty livres (20 to 24 shillings) per head for their whole annual consumption: "I do not mean in money, but including all that they consume in kind from their own crops."* When we add that they had not the virtual fixity of tenure of the metayers of Italy, ("in Limousin," says Arthur Young,† "the metayers are considered as little better than menial servants, removable at pleasure, and obliged to conform in all things to the will of the landlords,") it is evident that their case affords no argument against the metayer system in its better form. A population who could call nothing their own—who, like the Irish cottiers, could not in any contingency be worse off—had nothing to restrain them from multiplying, and subdividing the land, until stopped by actual starvation.

We shall find a very different picture, by the most accurate authorities, of the metayer cultivation of Italy. In the first place, as to subdivision. In Lombardy, according to Châteauvieux,‡ there are few farms which exceed sixty acres, and few which have less than ten. These farms are all occupied by metayers at half profit. They invariably display "an extent§ and a richness in buildings rarely known in any other country in Europe." Their plan "affords the greatest room with the least extent of building; is best adapted to arrange and secure the crop; and is, at the same time, the most economical, and the least exposed to accidents by fire." The court-yard "exhibits a whole so regular and commodious, and a system of such care and good order, that our dirty and ill-arranged farms can convey no adequate idea of." The same

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* See the "Memoir on the Surcharge of Taxes suffered by the Generality of Limoges, addressed to the Council of State in 1786," pp. 260-304 of the fourth volume of Turgot's Works. The occasional engagements of landlords (as mentioned by Arthur Young) to pay a part of the taxes, were, according to Turgot, of recent origin, under the compulsion of actual necessity. "The proprietor only consents to it when he can find no metayer on other terms; consequently, even in that case, the metayer is always reduced to what is barely sufficient to prevent him from dying of hunger." (p. 275).

† Vol. i. p. 404.

‡ *Letters from Italy*, translated by Rigby, p. 16. § Ibid. pp. 19, 20.

description applies to Piedmont. The rotation of crops is excellent. "I should think* no country can bring so large a portion of its produce to market as Piedmont." Though the soil is not naturally very fertile, "the number of cities is prodigiously great." The agriculture must, therefore, be eminently favourable to the net as well as to the gross produce of the land. "Each plough works thirty-two acres in the season. . . . Nothing can be more perfect or neater than the hoeing and moulding up the maize, when in full growth, by a single plough, with a pair of oxen, without injury to a single plant, while all the weeds are effectually destroyed." So much for agricultural skill. "Nothing can be so excellent as the crop which precedes and that which follows it." The wheat "is thrashed by a cylinder, drawn by a horse, and guided by a boy, while the labourers turn over the straw with forks. This process lasts nearly a fortnight; it is quick and economical, and completely gets out the grain. . . . . In no part of the world are the economy and the management of the land better understood than in Piedmont, and this explains the phenomenon of its great population, and immense export of provisions." All this under metayer cultivation.

Of the valley of the Arno, in its whole extent, both above and below Florence, the same writer thus speaks:†—"Forests of olive-trees covered the lower parts of the mountains, and by their foliage concealed an infinite number of small farms, which peopled these parts of the mountains; chestnut-trees raised their heads on the higher slopes, their healthy verdure contrasting with the pale tint of the olive-trees, and spreading a brightness over this amphitheatre. The road was bordered on each side with village-houses, not more than a hundred paces from each other. . . . . They are placed at a little distance from the road, and separated from it by a wall, and a terrace of some feet in extent. On the wall are commonly placed many vases of antique forms, in which flowers, aloes, and young orange trees are growing. The house itself is completely covered with

vines. . . . . Before these houses we saw groups of peasant females dressed in white linen, silk corsets, and straw-hats, ornamented with flowers. . . . . These houses being so near each other, it is evident that the land annexed to them must be small, and that property, in these valleys, must be very much divided; the extent of these domains being from three to ten acres. The land lies round the houses, and is divided into fields by small canals, or rows of trees, some of which are mulberry-trees, but the greatest number poplars, the leaves of which are eaten by the cattle. Each tree supports a vine. . . . . These divisions, arrayed in oblong squares, are large enough to be cultivated by a plough without wheels, and a pair of oxen. There is a pair of oxen between ten or twelve of the farmers; they employ them successively in the cultivation of all the farms. . . . . Almost every farm maintains a well-looking horse, which goes in a small two-wheeled cart, neatly made, and painted red; they serve for all the purposes of draught for the farm, and also to convey the farmer's daughters to mass and to balls. Thus, on holidays, hundreds of these little carts are seen flying in all directions, carrying the young women, decorated with flowers and ribbons."

This is not a picture of poverty; and so far as agriculture is concerned, it effectually redeems metayer cultivation, as existing in these countries, from the reproaches of English writers; but with respect to the condition of the cultivators, Châteauvieux's testimony is, in some points, not so favourable. "It is* neither the natural fertility of the soil, nor the abundance which strikes the eye of the traveller, which constitute the well-being of its inhabitants. It is the number of individuals among whom the total produce is divided, which fixes the portion that each is enabled to enjoy. Here it is very small. I have thus far, indeed, exhibited a delightful country, well watered, fertile, and covered with a perpetual vegetation; I have shown it divided into countless enclosures, which, like so many beds in a garden, display a thousand varying productions; I have shown, that to all these enclosures are attached well-built

* *Letters from Italy*, pp. 73-6.

houses, clothed with vines, and decorated with flowers; but, on entering them, we find a total want of all the conveniences of life, a table more than frugal, and a general appearance of privation." Is not Châteauvieux here unconsciously contrasting the condition of the metayers with that of the farmers of other countries, when the proper standard with which to compare it is that of the agricultural day-labourers?

Arthur Young says,* "I was assured that these metayers are (especially near Florence) much at their ease; that on holidays they are dressed remarkably well, and not without objects of luxury, as silver, gold, and silk; and live well, on plenty of bread, wine, and legumes. In some instances this may possibly be the case, but the general fact is contrary. It is absurd to think that metayers, upon such a farm as is cultivated by a pair of oxen, can live at their ease; and a clear proof of their poverty is this, that the landlord, who provides half the live stock, is often obliged to lend the peasant money to procure his half. . . . . The metayers, not in the vicinity of the city, are so poor, that landlords even lend them corn to eat: their food is black bread, made of a mixture with vetches; and their drink is very little wine, mixed with water, and called *aquarolle;* meat on Sundays only; their dress very ordinary." Mr. Jones admits the superior comfort of the metayers near Florence, and attributes it partly to straw-platting, by which the women of the peasantry can earn, according to Châteauvieux,† from fifteen to twenty pence a day. But even this fact tells in favour of the metayer system; for in those parts of England in which either straw-platting or lace-making is carried on by the women and children of the labouring class, as in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, the condition of the class is not better, but rather worse than elsewhere, the wages of agricultural labour being depressed by a full equivalent.

In spite of Châteauvieux's statement respecting the poverty of the metayers, his opinion, in respect to Italy at least, is given in favour of the system. "It occupies‡ and constantly interests the proprietors,

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* *Travels*, vol. ii. p. 156. † *Letters from Italy*, p. 75.

‡ Ibid. pp. 295-6.

which is never the case with great proprietors who lease their estates at fixed rents. It establishes a community of interests, and relations of kindness between the proprietors and the metayers; a kindness which I have often witnessed, and from which result great advantages in the moral condition of society. The proprietor, under this system, always interested in the success of the crop, never refuses to make an advance upon it, which the land promises to repay with interest. It is by these advances and by the hope thus inspired, that the rich proprietors of land have gradually perfected the whole rural economy of Italy. It is to them that it owes the numerous systems of irrigation which water its soil, as also the establishment of the terrace culture on the hills: gradual but permanent improvements, which common peasants, for want of means, could never have effected, and which could never have been accomplished by the farmers, nor by the great proprietors who let their estates at fixed rents, because they are not sufficiently interested. Thus the interested system forms of itself that alliance between the rich proprietor, whose means provide for the improvement of the culture, and the metayer whose care and labours are directed, by a common interest, to make the most of these advances."

But the testimony most favourable to the system is that of Sismondi, which has the advantage of being specific, and from accurate knowledge; his information being not that of a traveller, but that of a resident proprietor, intimately acquainted with rural life. His statements apply to Tuscany generally, and more particularly to the Val di Nievole, in which his own property lay, and which is not within the supposed privileged circle immediately round Florence. It is one of the districts in which the size of farms appears to be the smallest. The following is his description of the dwellings and mode of life of the metayers of that district.*

"The house, built of good walls with lime and mortar, has always at least one story, sometimes two, above the ground floor. On the ground floor are generally the kitchen, a cowhouse for two horned

* From his Sixth Essay, formerly referred to.

cattle, and the storehouse, which takes its name, *tinaia*, from the large vats (*tini*) in which the wine is put to ferment, without any pressing: it is there also that the metayer locks up his casks, his oil, and his grain. Almost always there is also a shed supported against the house, where he can work under cover to mend his tools, or chop forage for his cattle. On the first and second stories are two, three, and often four bedrooms. The largest and most airy of these is generally destined by the metayer, in the months of May and June, to the bringing up of silkworms. Great chests to contain clothes and linen, and some wooden chairs, are the chief furniture of the chambers; but a newly-married wife always brings with her a wardrobe of walnut wood. The beds are uncurtained and unroofed, but on each of them, besides a good paillasse, filled with the elastic straw of the maize plant, there are one or two mattresses of wool, or, among the poorest, of tow, a good blanket, sheets of strong hempen cloth, and on the best bed of the family a coverlet of silk padding, which is spread on festival days. The only fireplace is in the kitchen; and there also is the great wooden table where the family dines, and the benches; the great chest which serves at once for keeping the bread and other provisions, and for kneading; a tolerably complete though cheap assortment of pans, dishes, and earthenware plates: one or two metal lamps, a steelyard, and at least two copper pitchers for drawing and holding water. The linen and the working clothes of the family have all been spun by the women of the house. The clothes, both of men and of women, are of the stuff called *mezza lana* when thick, *mola* when thin, and made of a coarse thread of hemp or tow, filled up with cotton or wool; it is dried by the same women by whom it was spun. It would hardly be believed what a quantity of cloth and of *mezza lana* the peasant women are able to accumulate by assiduous industry; how many sheets there are in the store; what a number of shirts, jackets, trowsers, petticoats, and gowns are possessed by every member of the family. By way of example I add in a note the inventory of the peasant family best known to me: it is neither one of the richest nor of the poorest, and lives happily by its industry on half the pro-

duce of less than ten *arpents* of land.* The young women had a marriage portion of fifty crowns, twenty paid down, and the rest by instalments of two every year. The Tuscan crown is worth six francs [4*s.* 10*d.*]. The commonest marriage portion of a peasant girl in the other parts of Tuscany, where the metairies are larger, is 100 crowns, 600 francs."

Is this poverty, or consistent with poverty? When a common, M. de Sismondi even says *the* common, marriage portion of a metayer's daughter is 24*l.* English money, equivalent to at least 50*l.* in Italy and in that rank of life; when one whose dowry is only half that amount, has the wardrobe described, which is represented by Sismondi as a fair average; the class must be fully comparable, in general condition, to a large proportion even of capitalist farmers in other countries; and incomparably above the day labourers of any country, except a new colony, or the United States. Very little can be inferred, against such evidence, from a traveller's impression of the poor quality of their food. Its inexpensive character may be rather the effect of economy than of necessity. Costly feeding is not the favourite luxury of a southern people; their diet in all classes is principally vegetable, and no peasantry on the Continent has the superstition of the English labourer respecting white bread. But the nourishment of the Tuscan peasants, according to Sismondi, "is wholesome and various: its basis is an excellent wheaten bread, brown, but pure from bran and from all mixture." In the bad season, they take but two meals a day: at ten in the morning they eat their pollenta, at the beginning of the night

* Inventory of the *trousseau* of Jane, daughter of Valente Papini, on her marriage with Giovacchino Landi, the 29th of April 1835, at Porta Vecchia, near Pescia:

"28 shifts, 7 best dresses (of particular fabrics of silk), 7 dresses of printed cotton, 2 winter working dresses (*mezza lana*), 3 summer working dresses and petticoats (*mola*), 3 white petticoats, 5 aprons of printed linen, 1 of black silk, 1 of black merinos, 9 coloured working aprons (*mola*), 4 white, 8 coloured, and 3 silk, handkerchiefs, 2 embroidered veils and one of tulle, 3 towels, 14 pairs of stockings, 2 hats (one of felt, the other of fine straw); 2 cameos set in gold, 2 golden earrings, 1 chaplet with two Roman silver crowns, 1 coral necklace with its cross of gold. . . . . All the richer married women of the class have, besides, the *veste di seta*, the great holiday dress, which they only wear four or five times in their lives."

their soup, and after it bread with a relish of some sort (*companatico*). In summer they have three meals, at eight, at one, and in the evening; but the fire is lighted only once a day, for dinner, which consists of soup, and a dish of salt meat or dried fish, or haricots, or greens, which are eaten with bread. Salt meat enters in a very small quantity into this diet, for it is reckoned that forty pounds of salt pork per head suffice amply for a year's provision; twice a week a small piece of it is put into the soup. On Sundays they have always on the table a dish of fresh meat, but a piece which weighs only a pound or a pound and a half suffices for the whole family, however numerous it may be. It must not be forgotten that the Tuscan peasants generally produce olive oil for their own consumption: they use it not only for lamps, but as seasoning to all the vegetables prepared for the table, which it renders both more savoury and more nutritive. At breakfast their food is bread, and sometimes cheese and fruit; at supper, bread and salad. Their drink is composed of the inferior wine of the country, the *vinella* or *piquette* made by fermenting in water the pressed skins of the grapes. They always, however, reserve a little of their best wine for the day when they thrash their corn, and for some festivals which are kept in families. About fifty bottles of vinella per annum, and five sacks of wheat (about 1000 pounds of bread) are considered as the supply necessary for a full grown man."

The remarks of Sismondi on the moral influences of this state of society are not less worthy of attention. The rights and obligations of the metayer being fixed by usage, and all taxes and rates being paid by the proprietor, "the metayer has the advantages of landed property without the burthen of defending it. It is the landlord to whom, with the land, belong all its disputes: the tenant lives in peace with all his neighbours; between him and them there is no motive for rivality or distrust, he preserves a good understanding with them, as well as with his landlord, with the tax-collector, and with the church: he sells little, and buys little; he touches little money, but he seldom has any to pay. The gentle and kindly character of the Tuscans is often spoken of, but without sufficiently remarking the cause which has contributed most to keep up that gentleness;

the tenure, by which the entire class of farmers, more than three-fourths of the population, are kept free from almost every occasion for quarrel." The fixity of tenure which the metayer, so long as he fulfils his own obligations, possesses by usage, though not by law, gives him the local attachments, and almost the strong sense of personal interest, characteristic of a proprietor. "The metayer lives on his metairie as on his inheritance, loving it with affection, labouring incessantly to improve it, confiding in the future, and making sure that his land will be tilled after him by his children and his children's children. In fact, the majority of metayers live from generation to generation on the same farm; they know it in its details with a minuteness which the feeling of property can alone give. The plots terrassed up, one above the other, are often not above four feet wide; but there is not one of them, the qualities of which the metayer has not studied. This one is dry, that other is cold and damp: here the soil is deep, there it is a mere crust which hardly covers the rock; wheat thrives best on one, rye on another: here it would be labour wasted to sow Indian corn, elsewhere the soil is unfit for beans and lupins, further off flax will grow admirably, the edge of this brook will be suited for hemp. In this way one learns with surprise from the metayer, that in a space of ten arpents, the soil, the aspect, and the inclination of the ground present greater variety than a rich farmer is generally able to distinguish in a farm of five hundred acres. For the latter knows that he is only a temporary occupant; and moreover, that he must conduct his operations by general rules, and neglect details. But the experienced metayer has had his intelligence so awakened by interest and affection, as to be the best of observers; and with the whole future before him, he thinks not of himself alone, but of his children and grandchildren. Therefore, when he plants an olive, a tree which lasts for centuries, and excavates at the bottom of the hollow in which he plants it, a channel to let out the water by which it would be injured, he studies all the strata of the earth which he has to dig out."*

* Of the intelligence of this interesting people, M. de Sismondi speaks in the most favourable terms. Few of them can read; but there is often one [illegible]

§ 4. I do not offer these quotations as evidence of the intrinsic xcellence of the metayer system; but they surely suffice to prove hat neither "land miserably cultivated" nor a people in "the most abject poverty" have any necessary connexion with it, and that the unmeasured vituperation lavished upon the system by English writers, is grounded on an extremely narrow view of the subject. I look upon the rural economy of Italy as simply so much additional evidence in favour of small occupations with permanent tenure. It is an example of what can be accomplished by those two elements, even under the disadvantage of the peculiar nature of the metayer contract, in which the motives to exertion on the part of the tenant are only half as strong as if he farmed the land on the same footing of perpetuity at a money-rent, either fixed, or varying according to some rule which would leave to the tenant the whole benefit of his own exertions. The metayer tenure is not one which we should be anxious to introduce where the exigencies of society had not naturally given birth to it; but neither ought we to be eager to abolish it on a mere *à priori* view of its disadvantages. If the system in Tuscany works as well in practice as it is represented to do, with every appearance of minute knowledge, by so competent an authority as Sismondi; if the mode of living of the people, and the size of farms, have for ages maintained, and still maintain themselves* such as they are said to be by him, it were to be regretted

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the family destined for the priesthood, who reads to them on winter evenings. Their language differs little from the purest Italian. The taste for improvisation in verse is general. "The peasants of the Vale of Nievole frequent the theatre in summer on festival days, from nine to eleven at night: their admission costs them little more than five French sous [$2\frac{1}{2}d.$]. Their favourite author is Alfieri; the whole history of the Atridæ is familiar to these people who cannot read, and who seek from that austere poet a relaxation from their rude labours." Unlike most rustics, they find pleasure in the beauty of their country. "In the hills of the vale of Nievole there is in front of every house a threshing-ground, seldom of more than 25 or 30 square fathoms; it is often the only level space in the whole farm: it is at the same time a terrace which commands the plains and the valley, and looks out upon a delightful country. Scarcely ever have I stood ...mire it, without the metayer's coming out to enjoy my admiration ... finger the beauties which he thought might have escap

... family of metayers proposing to t

that a state of rural well-being so much beyond what is realized in most European countries, should be put to hazard by an attempt to introduce, under the guise of agricultural improvement, a system of money rents and capitalist farmers. Even where the metayers are poor, and the subdivision great, it is not to be assumed as of course, that the change would be for the better. The enlargement of farms, and the introduction of what are called agricultural improvements, usually diminish the number of labourers employed on the land; and unless the growth of capital in trade and manufactures affords an opening for the displaced population, or unless there are reclaimable wastes on which they can be located, competition will so reduce wages, that they will probably be worse off as day-labourers than they were as metayers.

Mr. Jones very properly objects against the French Economists of the last century, that in pursuing their favourite object of introducing money-rents, they turned their minds solely to putting farmers in the place of metayers, instead of transforming the existing metayers into farmers; which, as he justly remarks, can scarcely be effected, unless, to enable the metayers to save and become owners of stock, the proprietors submit for a considerable time to a diminution of income, instead of expecting an increase of it, which has generally been their immediate motive for making the attempt. If this transformation were effected, and no other change made in the metayer's condition; if, preserving all the other rights which usage ensures to him, he merely got rid of the landlord's claim to half the produce, paying in lieu of it a moderate fixed rent; he would be so far in a better position than at present, as the whole, instead of only half the fruits of any improvement he made, would now belong to himself: but even so, the benefit would not be without alloy; for a metayer, though not himself a

landlord to divide the metairie, unless the work is really more than they can do, and they feel assured of retaining the same enjoyments on a smaller piece of ground. We never find several sons all marrying, and forming as many new families: only one marries and undertakes the charge of the household: none of the others marry unless the first is childless, or unless some one of them has the offer of a new metairie." *New Principles of Political Economy*, book iii. ch. 5.

capitalist, has a capitalist for his partner, and has the use, in Italy at least, of a considerable capital, as is proved by the excellence of the farm buildings: and it is not probable that the landowners would any longer consent to peril their moveable property on the hazards of agricultural enterprise, when assured of a fixed money income without it. Thus would the question stand, even if the change left undisturbed the metayer's virtual fixity of tenure, and converted him, in fact, into a peasant proprietor at a quit-rent. But if we suppose him converted into a mere tenant, displaceable at the landlord's will, and liable to have his rent raised by competition to any amount which any unfortunate being in search of subsistence can be found to offer or promise for it; he would lose all the features in his condition which preserve it from being deteriorated; he would be cast down from his present position of a kind of half proprietor of the land, and would sink into a cottier tenant.

OF COTTIERS.

§ 1. By the general appellation of cottier tenure I shall designate all cases without exception in which the labourer makes his contract for land without the intervention of a capitalist farmer, and in which the conditions of the contract, especially the amount of rent, are determined not by custom but by competition. The principal European example of this tenure is Ireland, and it is from that country that the term cottier is derived.* By far the greater part of the agricultural population of Ireland might until very lately have been said to be cottier-tenants; except so far as the Ulster tenant-right constituted an exception. There was, indeed, a numerous class of labourers who (we may presume through the refusal either of proprietors or of tenants in possession to permit any further subdivision) had been unable to obtain even the smallest patch of land as permanent tenants. But, from the deficiency of capital, the custom of paying wages in land was so universal, that even those who worked as casual labourers for the cottiers or for such larger farmers as were found in the country, were usually paid not in money, but by permission to cultivate for the season a piece of ground, which was generally delivered to them

* In its original acceptation, the word "cottier" designated a class of sub-tenants, who rent a cottage and an acre or two of land from the small farmers. But the usage of writers has long since stretched the term to include those small farmers themselves, and generally all peasant farmers whose rents are determined by competition.

by the farmer ready manured, and was known by the name of conacre. For this they agreed to pay a money rent, often of several pounds an acre, but no money actually passed, the debt being worked out in labour, at a money valuation.

The produce, on the cottier system, being divided into two portions, rent, and the remuneration of the labourer; the one is evidently determined by the other. The labourer has whatever the landlord does not take: the condition of the labourer depends on the amount of rent. But rent, being regulated by competition, depends upon the relation between the demand for land, and the supply of it. The demand for land depends on the number of competitors, and the competitors are the whole rural population. The effect, therefore, of this tenure, is to bring the principle of population to act directly on the land, and not, as in England, on capital. Rent, in this state of things, depends on the proportion between population and land. As the land is a fixed quantity, while population has an unlimited power of increase; unless something checks that increase, the competition for land soon forces up rent to the highest point consistent with keeping the population alive. The effects, therefore, of cottier tenure depend on the extent to which the capacity of population to increase is controlled, either by custom, by individual prudence, or by starvation and disease.

It would be an exaggeration to affirm, that cottier tenancy is absolutely incompatible with a prosperous condition of the labouring class. If we could suppose it to exist among a people to whom a high standard of comfort was habitual; whose requirements were such, that they would not offer a higher rent for land than would leave them an ample subsistence, and whose moderate increase of numbers left no unemployed population to force up rents by competition, save when the increasing produce of the land from increase of skill would enable a higher rent to be paid without inconvenience; the cultivating class might be as well remunerated, might have as large a share of the necessaries and comforts of life, on this system of tenure as on any other. They would not, however, while their rents were arbitrary, enjoy any of the peculiar advantages which metayers on the Tuscan system derive from their connexion with

the land. They would neither have the use of a capital belonging to their landlords, nor would the want of this be made up by the intense motives to bodily and mental exertion which act upon the peasant who has a permanent tenure. On the contrary, any increased value given to the land by the exertions of the tenant, would have no effect but to raise the rent against himself, either the next year, or at farthest when his lease expired. The landlords might have justice or good sense enough not to avail themselves of the advantage which competition would give them; and different landlords would do so in different degrees. But it is never safe to expect that a class or body of men will act in opposition to their immediate pecuniary interest; and even a doubt on the subject would be almost as fatal as a certainty, for when a person is considering whether or not to undergo a present exertion or sacrifice for a comparatively remote future, the scale is turned by a very small probability that the fruits of the exertion or of the sacrifice would be taken away from him. The only safeguard against these uncertainties would be the growth of a custom, insuring a permanence of tenure in the same occupant, without liability to any other increase of rent than might happen to be sanctioned by the general sentiments of the community. The Ulster tenant-right is such a custom. The very considerable sums which outgoing tenants obtain from their successors, for the goodwill of their farms,* in the first place actually limit the competition for land to persons who have such sums to offer: while the same fact also proves that full advantage is not taken by the landlord of even that more limited competition, since the landlord's rent does not amount to the whole of what the incoming tenant not only offers but actually pays. He does so in the full confidence that the rent will

* "It is not uncommon for a tenant without a lease to sell the bare privilege of occupancy or possession of his farm, without any visible sign of improvement having been made by him, at from ten to sixteen, up to twenty and even forty years' purchase of the rent."—(*Digest of Evidence taken by Lord Devon's Commission*, Introductory Chapter.) The compiler adds, "the comparative tranquillity of that district" (Ulster) "may perhaps be mainly attributable to this fact."

not be raised; and for this he has the guarantee of a custom, not recognised by law, but deriving its binding force from another sanction, perfectly well understood in Ireland.* Without one or other of these supports, a custom limiting the rent of land is not likely to grow up in any progressive community. If wealth and population were stationary, rent also would generally be stationary, and after remaining a long time unaltered, would probably come to be considered unalterable. But all progress in wealth and population tends to a rise of rents. Under a metayer system there is an established mode in which the owner of land is sure of participating in the increased produce drawn from it. But on the cottier system he can only do so by a readjustment of the contract, while that readjustment, in a progressive community, would almost always be to his advantage. His interest, therefore, is decidedly opposed to the growth of any custom commuting rent into a fixed demand.

§ 2. Where the amount of rent is not limited, either by law or custom, a cottier system has the disadvantages of the worst metayer system, with scarcely any of the advantages by which, in the best forms of that tenure, they are compensated. It is scarcely possible that cottier agriculture should be other than miserable. There is not the same necessity that the condition of the cultivators should be so. Since by a sufficient restraint on population competition for land could be kept down, and extreme poverty prevented, habits of prudence and a high standard of comfort, once established, would have a fair chance of maintaining themselves: though even in these favourable circumstances the motives to prudence would be considerably weaker than in the case of metayers, protected by

* "It is in the great majority of cases not a reimbursement for outlay incurred, or improvements effected on the land, but a mere life insurance or purchase of immunity from outrage."—(*Digest, ut supra.*) "The present tenant-right of Ulster" (the writer judiciously remarks) "is an embryo *copy-hold.*" "Even there, if the tenant-right be disregarded, and a tenant be ejected [illegible] having received the price of his good-will, outrages are generally the [illegible] "The disorganized state of Tipperary, and the [illegible] are but a methodized war to obtain

custom (like those of Tuscany) from being deprived of their farms: since a metayer family, thus protected, could not be impoverished by any other improvident multiplication than their own, but a cottier family, however prudent and self-restraining, may have the rent raised against it by the consequences of the multiplication of other families. Any protection to the cottiers against this evil could only be derived from a salutary sentiment of duty or dignity, pervading the class. From this source, however, they might derive considerable protection. If the habitual standard of requirement among the class were high, a young man might not choose to offer a rent which would leave him in a worse condition than the preceding tenant; or it might be the general custom, as it actually is in some countries, not to marry until a farm is vacant.

But it is not where a high standard of comfort has rooted itself in the habits of the labouring class, that we are ever called upon to consider the effects of a cottier system. That system is found only where the habitual requirements of the rural labourers are the lowest possible; where as long as they are not actually starving, they will multiply: and population is only checked by the diseases, and the shortness of life, consequent on insufficiency of merely physical necessaries. This was the state of the largest portion of the Irish peasantry. When a people have sunk into this state, and still more when they have been in it from time immemorial, the cottier system is an almost insuperable obstacle to their emerging from it. When the habits of the people are such that their increase is never checked but by the impossibility of obtaining a bare support, and when this support can only be obtained from land, all stipulations and agreements respecting amount of rent are merely nominal; the competition for land makes the tenants undertake to pay more than it is possible they should pay, and when they have paid all they can, more almost always remains due.

"As it may fairly be said of the Irish peasantry," said Mr. Revans, the Secretary to the Irish Poor Law Enquiry Commission,*

* *Evils of the State of Ireland, their Causes and their Remedy.* Page 10. A pamphlet containing, among other things, an excellent digest and selection

"that every family which has not sufficient land to yield its food has one or more of its members supported by begging, it will easily be conceived that every endeavour is made by the peasantry to obtain small holdings, and that they are not influenced in their biddings by the fertility of the land, or by their ability to pay the rent, but solely by the offer which is most likely to gain them possession. The rents which they promise, they are almost invariably incapable of paying; and consequently they become indebted to those under whom they hold, almost as soon as they take possession. They give up, in the shape of rent, the whole produce of the land with the exception of a sufficiency of potatoes for a subsistence; but as this is rarely equal to the promised rent, they constantly have against them an increasing balance. In some cases, the largest quantity of produce which their holdings ever yielded, or which, under their system of tillage, they could in the most favourable seasons be made to yield, would not be equal to the rent bid; consequently, if the peasant fulfilled his engagement with his landlord, which he is rarely able to accomplish, he would till the ground for nothing, and give his landlord a premium for being allowed to till it. On the sea-coast, fishermen, and in the northern counties those who have looms, frequently pay more in rent than the market value of the whole produce of the land they hold. It might be supposed that they would be better without land under such circumstances. But fishing might fail during a week or two, and so might the demand for the produce of the loom, when, did they not possess the land upon which their food is grown, they might starve. The full amount of the rent bid, however, is rarely paid. The peasant remains constantly in debt to his landlord; his miserable possessions—the wretched clothing of himself and of his family, the two or three stools, and the few pieces of crockery, which his wretched hovel contains, would not, if sold, liquidate the standing and generally accumulating debt. The peasantry are mostly a year in arrear, and their excuse for not paying more is

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of evidence from the mass collected by the Commission presided over by Archbishop Whately

destitution. Should the produce of the holding, in any year, be more than usually abundant, or should the peasant by any accident become possessed of any property, his comforts cannot be increased; he cannot indulge in better food, nor in a greater quantity of it. His furniture cannot be increased, neither can his wife or children be better clothed. The acquisition must go to the person under whom he holds. The accidental addition will enable him to reduce his arrear of rent, and thus to defer ejectment. But this must be the bound of his expectation."

As an extreme instance of the intensity of competition for land, and of the monstrous height to which it occasionally forced up the nominal rent; we may cite from the evidence taken by Lord Devon's Commission,* a fact attested by Mr. Hurly, Clerk of the Crown for Kerry: "I have known a tenant bid for a farm that I was perfectly well acquainted with, worth 50*l.* a year: I saw the competition get up to such an extent, that he was declared the tenant at 450*l.*"

§ 3. In such a condition, what can a tenant gain by any amount of industry or prudence, and what lose by any recklessness? If the landlord at any time exerted his full legal rights, the cottier would not be able even to live. If by extra exertion he doubled the produce of his bit of land, or if he prudently abstained from producing mouths to eat it up, his only gain would be to have more left to pay to his landlord; while, if he had twenty children, they would still be fed first, and the landlord could only take what was left. Almost alone amongst mankind the cottier is in this condition, that he can scarcely be either better or worse off by any act of his own. If he were industrious or prudent, nobody but his landlord would gain; if he is lazy or intemperate, it is at his landlord's expense. A situation more devoid of motives to either labour or self-command, imagination itself cannot conceive. The inducements of free human beings are taken away, and those of a slave not substituted. He has nothing to hope, and nothing to

* *Evidence*, p. 851.

fear, except being dispossessed of his holding, and against this he protects himself by the *ultima ratio* of a defensive civil war. Rockism and Whiteboyism were the determination of a people who had nothing that could be called theirs but a daily meal of the lowest description of food, not to submit to being deprived of that for other people's convenience.

Is it not, then, a bitter satire on the mode in which opinions are formed on the most important problems of human nature and life, to find public instructors of the greatest pretension, imputing the backwardness of Irish industry, and the want of energy of the Irish people in improving their condition, to a peculiar indolence and recklessness in the Celtic race? Of all vulgar modes of escaping from the consideration of the effect of social and moral influences on the human mind, the most vulgar is that of attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent natural differences. What race would not be indolent and insouciant when things are so arranged, that they derive no advantage from forethought or exertion? If such are the arrangements in the midst of which they live and work, what wonder if the listlessness and indifference so engendered are not shaken off the first moment an opportunity offers when exertion would really be of use? It is very natural that a pleasure-loving and sensitively organized people like the Irish, should be less addicted to steady routine labour than the English, because life has more excitements for them independent of it; but they are not less fitted for it than their Celtic brethren the French, nor less so than the Tuscans, or the ancient Greeks. An excitable organization is precisely that in which, by adequate inducements, it is easiest to kindle a spirit of animated exertion. It speaks nothing against the capacities of industry in human beings, that they will not exert themselves without motive. No labourers work harder, in England or America, than the Irish; but not under a cottier system.

§ 4. The multitudes who till the soil of India, are in a condition sufficiently analogous to the cottier system, and at the same [illegible] different from it, to render the comparison of the

two a source of some instruction. In most parts of India there are, and perhaps have always been, only two contracting parties, the landlord and the peasant: the landlord being generally the sovereign, except where he has, by a special instrument, conceded his rights to an individual, who becomes his representative. The payments, however, of the peasants, or ryots as they are termed, have seldom if ever been regulated, as in Ireland, by competition. Though the customs locally obtaining were infinitely various, and though practically no custom could be maintained against the sovereign's will, there was always a rule of some sort common to a neighbourhood; the collector did not make his separate bargain with the peasant, but assessed each according to the rule adopted for the rest. The idea was thus kept up of a right of property in the tenant, or at all events, of a right to permanent possession; and the anomaly arose of a fixity of tenure in the peasant-farmer, co-existing with an arbitrary power of increasing the rent.

When the Mogul government substituted itself throughout the greater part of India for the Hindoo rulers, it proceeded on a different principle. A minute survey was made of the land, and upon that survey an assessment was founded, fixing the specific payment due to the government from each field. If this assessment had never been exceeded, the ryots would have been in the comparatively advantageous position of peasant-proprietors, subject to a heavy, but a fixed quit-rent. The absence, however, of any real protection against illegal extortions, rendered this improvement in their condition rather nominal than real; and, except during the occasional accident of a humane and vigorous local administrator, the exactions had no practical limit but the inability of the ryot to pay more.

It was to this state of things that the English rulers of India succeeded; and they were, at an early period, struck with the importance of putting an end to this arbitrary character of the land revenue, and imposing a fixed limit to the government demand. They did not attempt to go back to the Mogul valuation. It has been in general the very rational practice of the English Govern-

ment in India, to pay little regard to what was laid down as the theory of the native institutions, but to inquire into the rights which existed and were respected in practice, and to protect and enlarge those. For a long time, however, it blundered grievously about matters of fact, and grossly misunderstood the usages and rights which it found existing. Its mistakes arose from the inability of ordinary minds to imagine a state of social relations fundamentally different from those with which they are practically familiar. England being accustomed to great estates and great landlords, the English rulers took it for granted that India must possess the like; and looking round for some set of people who might be taken for the objects of their search, they pitched upon a sort of tax-gatherers called zemindars. "The zemindar," says the philosophical historian of India,* "had some of the attributes which belong to a landowner; he collected the rents of a particular district, he governed the cultivators of that district, lived in comparative splendour, and his son succeeded him when he died. The zemindars, therefore, it was inferred without delay, were the proprietors of the soil, the landed nobility and gentry of India. It was not considered that the zemindars, though they collected the rents, did not keep them; but paid them all away, with a small deduction, to the government. It was not considered that if they governed the ryots, and in many respects exercised over them despotic power, they did not govern them as tenants of theirs, holding their lands either at will or by contract under them. The possession of the ryot was an hereditary possession; from which it was unlawful for the zemindar to displace him; for every farthing which the zemindar drew from the ryot, he was bound to account; and it was only by fraud, if, out of all that he collected, he retained an *ana* more than the small proportion which, as pay for the collection, he was permitted to receive."

"There was an opportunity in India," continues the historian, "to which the history of the world presents not a parallel. Next after the sovereign, the immediate cultivators had, by far, the greatest portion of interest in the soil. For the rights (such as

* Mill's *History of British India*, book vi. ch. 8.

they were) of the zemindars, a complete compensation might have easily been made. The generous resolution was adopted, of sacrificing to the improvement of the country, the proprietary rights of the sovereign. The motives to improvement which property gives, and of which the power was so justly appreciated, might have been bestowed upon those upon whom they would have operated with a force incomparably greater than that with which they could operate upon any other class of men: they might have been bestowed upon those from whom alone, in every country, the principal improvements in agriculture must be derived, the immediate cultivators of the soil. And a measure worthy to be ranked among the noblest that ever were taken for the improvement of any country, might have helped to compensate the people of India for the miseries of that misgovernment which they had so long endured. But the legislators were English aristocrats; and aristocratical prejudices prevailed."

The measure proved a total failure, as to the main effects which its well-meaning promoters expected from it. Unaccustomed to estimate the mode in which the operation of any given institution is modified even by such variety of circumstances as exists within a single kingdom, they flattered themselves that they had created, throughout the Bengal provinces, English landlords, and it proved that they had only created Irish ones. The new landed aristocracy disappointed every expectation built upon them. They did nothing for the improvement of their estates, but everything for their own ruin. The same pains not being taken, as had been taken in Ireland, to enable the landlords to defy the consequences of their improvidence, nearly the whole land of Bengal had to be sequestrated and sold, for debts or arrears of revenue, and in one generation most of the ancient zemindars had ceased to exist. Other families, mostly the descendants of Calcutta money-dealers, or of native officials who had enriched themselves under the British government, now occupy their place; and live as useless drones on the soil which has been given up to them. Whatever the government has sacrificed of its pecuniary claims, for the creation of such a class, has at the best been wasted.

In the parts of India into which the British rule has been more recently introduced, the blunder has been avoided of endowing a useless body of great landlords with gifts from the public revenue. In most parts of the Madras and in part of the Bombay Presidency, the rent is paid directly to the government by the immediate cultivator. In the North-Western Provinces, the government makes its engagement with the village community collectively, determining the share to be paid by each individual, but holding them jointly responsible for each other's default. But in the greater part of India, the immediate cultivators have not obtained a perpetuity of tenure at a fixed rent. The government manages the land on the principle on which a good Irish landlord manages his estate: not putting it up to competition, not asking the cultivators what they will promise to pay, but determining for itself what they can afford to pay, and defining its demand accordingly. In many districts a portion of the cultivators are considered as tenants of the rest, the government making its demand from those only (often a numerous body) who are looked upon as the successors of the original settlers or conquerors of the village. Sometimes the rent is fixed only for one year, sometimes for three or five; but the uniform tendency of present policy is towards long leases, extending, in the northern provinces of India, to a term of thirty years. This arrangement has not existed for a sufficient time to have shown by experience how far the motives to improvement which the long lease creates in the minds of the cultivators, fall short of the influence of a perpetual settlement. But the two plans, of annual settlements and of short leases, are irrevocably condemned. They can only be said to have succeeded, in comparison with the unlimited oppression which existed before. They are approved by nobody, and were never looked upon in any other light than as temporary arrangements, to be abandoned when a more complete knowledge of the capabilities of the country should afford data for something more permanent.

MEANS OF ABOLISHING COTTIER TENANCY.

§ 1. When the first edition of the *Principles of Political Economy* was written and published, the question, what is to be done with a cottier population, was to the English Government the most urgent of practical questions. The majority of a population of eight millions, having long grovelled in helpless inertness and abject poverty under the cottier system, reduced by its operation to mere food of the cheapest description, and to an incapacity of either doing or willing anything for the improvement of their lot, had at last, by the failure of that lowest quality of food, been plunged into a state in which the alternative seemed to be either death, or to be permanently supported by other people, or a radical change in the economical arrangements under which it had hitherto been their misfortune to live. Such an emergency had compelled attention to the subject from the legislature and from the nation, but it could hardly be said, with much result; for, the evil having originated in a system of land tenancy which withdrew from the people every motive to industry or thrift except the fear of starvation, the remedy provided by Parliament was to take away even that, by conferring on them a legal claim to eleemosynary support: while, towards correcting the cause of the mischief, nothing was done, beyond vain complaints, though at the price to the national treasury of ten millions sterling for the delay.

"It is needless," (I observed) "to expend any argument in proving that the very foundation of the economical evils of Ireland is the cottier system; that while peasant rents fixed by competition are the practice of the country, to expect industry, useful activity, any restraint on population but death, or any the smallest diminu-

tion of poverty, is to look for figs on thistles and grapes on thorns. If our practical statesmen are not ripe for the recognition of this fact; or if, while they acknowledge it in theory, they have not a sufficient feeling of its reality, to be capable of founding upon it any course of conduct; there is still another, and a purely physical consideration, from which they will find it impossible to escape. If the one crop on which the people have hitherto supported themselves continues to be precarious, either some new and great impulse must be given to agricultural skill and industry, or the soil of Ireland can no longer feed anything like its present population. The whole produce of the western half of the island, leaving nothing for rent, will not now keep permanently in existence the whole of its people: and they will necessarily remain an annual charge on the taxation of the Empire, until they are reduced either by emigration or by starvation to a number corresponding with the low state of their industry, or unless the means are found of making that industry much more productive."

Since these words were written, events unforeseen by any one have saved the English rulers of Ireland from the embarrassments which would have been the just penalty of their indifference and want of foresight. Ireland, under cottier agriculture, could no longer supply food to its population: Parliament, by way of remedy, applied a stimulus to population, but none at all to production; the help, however, which had not been provided for the people of Ireland by political wisdom, came from an unexpected source. Self-supporting emigration—the Wakefield system, brought into effect on the voluntary principle and on a gigantic scale (the expenses of those who followed being paid from the earnings of those who went before) has, for the present, reduced the population down to the number for which the existing agricultural system can find employment and support. The census of 1851, compared with that of 1841, showed in round numbers a diminution of population of a million and a half. The subsequent census (of 1861) shows a further diminution of about half a million. The Irish having thus found the way to that flourishing continent which for generations will be capable of supporting in undiminished comfort the increase

of the population of the whole world; the peasantry of Ireland having learnt to fix their eyes on a terrestrial paradise beyond the ocean, as a sure refuge both from the oppression of the Saxon and from the tyranny of nature; there can be little doubt that however much the employment for agricultural labour may hereafter be diminished by the general introduction throughout Ireland of English farming—or even if, like the county of Sutherland, all Ireland should be turned into a grazing farm—the superseded people would migrate to America with the same rapidity, and as free of cost to the nation, as the million of Irish who went thither during the three years previous to 1851. Those who think that the land of a country exists for the sake of a few thousand landowners, and that as long as rents are paid, society and government have fulfilled their functions, may see in this consummation a happy end to Irish difficulties.

But this is not a time, nor is the human mind now in a condition, in which such insolent pretensions can be maintained. The land of Ireland, the land of every country, belongs to the people of that country. The individuals called landowners have no right, in morality and justice, to anything but the rent, or compensation for its saleable value. With regard to the land itself, the paramount consideration is, by what mode of appropriation and of cultivation it can be made most useful to the collective body of its inhabitants. To the owners of the rent it may be very convenient that the bulk of the inhabitants, despairing of justice in the country where they and their ancestors have lived and suffered, should seek on another continent that property in land which is denied to them at home. But the legislature of the empire ought to regard with other eyes the forced expatriation of millions of people. When the inhabitants of a country quit the country *en masse* because its Government will not make it a place fit for them to live in, the Government is judged and condemned. There is no necessity for depriving the landlords of one farthing of the pecuniary value of their legal rights; but justice requires that the actual cultivators should be enabled to become in Ireland what they will become in America—proprietors of the soil which they cultivate.

Good policy requires it no less. Those who, knowing neither Ireland nor any foreign country, take as their sole standard of social and economical excellence English practice, propose as the single remedy for Irish wretchedness, the transformation of the cottiers into hired labourers. But this is rather a scheme for the improvement of Irish agriculture, than of the condition of the Irish people. The status of a day-labourer has no charm for infusing forethought, frugality, or self-restraint, into a people devoid of them. If the Irish peasantry could be universally changed into receivers of wages, the old habits and mental characteristics of the people remaining, we should merely see four or five millions of people living as day-labourers in the same wretched manner in which as cottiers they lived before; equally passive in the absence of every comfort, equally reckless in multiplication, and even, perhaps, equally listless at their work; since they could not be dismissed in a body, and if they could, dismissal would now be simply remanding them to the poor-rate. Far other would be the effect of making them peasant proprietors. A people who in industry and providence have everything to learn—who are confessedly among the most backward of European populations in the industrial virtues—require for their regeneration the most powerful incitements by which those virtues can be stimulated: and there is no stimulus as yet comparable to property in land. A permanent interest in the soil to those who till it, is almost a guarantee for the most unwearied laboriousness: against over-population, though not infallible, it is the best preservative yet known, and where it failed, any other plan would probably fail much more egregiously; the evil would be beyond the reach of merely economic remedies.

The case of Ireland is similar in its requirements to that of India. In India, though great errors have from time to time been committed, no one ever proposed, under the name of agricultural improvement, to eject the ryots or peasant farmers from their possession; the improvement that has been looked for, has been through making their tenure more secure to them, and the sole difference of opinion is between those who contend for perpetuity, and those who think that long leases will suffice. The same question exists as to

Ireland: and it would be idle to deny that long leases, under such landlords as are sometimes to be found, do effect wonders, even in Ireland. But then they must be leases at a moderate rent. Long leases are in no way to be relied on for getting rid of cottierism. During the existence of cottier tenancy, leases have always been long; twenty-one years and three lives concurrent, was a usual term. But the rent being fixed by competition, at a higher amount than could be paid, so that the tenant neither had, nor could by any exertion acquire, a beneficial interest in the land, the advantage of a lease was merely nominal. In India, the government, where it has not imprudently made over its proprietary rights to the zemindars, is able to prevent this evil, because, being itself the landlord, it can fix the rent according to its own judgment; but under individual landlords, while rents are fixed by competition, and the competitors are a peasantry struggling for subsistence, nominal rents are inevitable, unless the population is so thin, that the competition itself is only nominal. The majority of landlords will grasp at immediate money and immediate power; and so long as they find cottiers eager to offer them everything, it is useless to rely on them for tempering the vicious practice by a considerate self-denial.

A perpetuity is a stronger stimulus to improvement than a long lease: not only because the longest lease, before coming to an end, passes through all the varieties of short leases down to no lease at all; but for more fundamental reasons. It is very shallow, even in pure economics, to take no account of the influence of imagination: there is a virtue in "for ever" beyond the longest term of years; even if the term is long enough to include children, and all whom a person individually cares for, yet until he has reached that high degree of mental cultivation at which the public good (which also includes perpetuity) acquires a paramount ascendancy over his feelings and desires, he will not exert himself with the same ardour to increase the value of an estate, his interest in which diminishes in value every year. Besides, while perpetual tenure is the general rule of landed property, as it is in all the countries of Europe, a tenure for a limited period, however long, is sure to be regarded as something of inferior consideration and dignity, and inspires less of

ardour to obtain it, and of attachment to it when obtained. But where a country is under cottier tenure, the question of perpetuity is quite secondary to the more important point, a limitation of the rent. Rent paid by a capitalist who farms for profit, and not for bread, may safely be abandoned to competition; rent paid by labourers cannot, unless the labourers were in a state of civilization and improvement which labourers have nowhere yet reached, and cannot easily reach under such a tenure. Peasant rents ought never to be arbitrary, never at the discretion of the landlord: either by custom or law, it is imperatively necessary that they should be fixed; and where no mutually advantageous custom, such as the metayer system of Tuscany, has established itself, reason and experience recommend that they should be fixed by authority: thus changing the rent into a quit-rent, and the farmer into a peasant proprietor.

For carrying this change into effect on a sufficiently large scale to accomplish the complete abolition of cottier tenancy, the mode which most obviously suggests itself is the direct one of doing the thing outright by Act of Parliament; making the whole land of Ireland the property of the tenants, subject to the rents now really paid (not the nominal rents), as a fixed rent charge. This, under the name of "fixity of tenure," was one of the demands of the Repeal Association during the most successful period of their agitation; and was better expressed by Mr. Conner, its earliest, most enthusiastic, and most indefatigable apostle,* by the words, "a valuation and a perpetuity." In such a measure there would not have been any injustice, provided the landlords were compensated for the present value of the chances of increase which they were prospectively required to forego. The rupture of existing social relations would hardly have been more violent than that effected by the ministers Stein and Hardenberg when, by a series of edicts,

* Author of numerous pamphlets, entitled "True Political Economy of Ireland," "Letter to the Earl of Devon," "Two Letters on the Rackrent Oppression of Ireland," and others. Mr. Conner has been an agitator on the subject since 1832.

in the early part of the present century, they revolutionized the state of landed property in the Prussian monarchy, and left their names to posterity among the greatest benefactors of their country. To enlightened foreigners writing on Ireland, Von Raumer and Gustave de Beaumont, a remedy of this sort seemed so exactly and obviously what the disease required, that they had some difficulty in comprehending how it was that the thing was not yet done.

This, however, would have been, in the first place, a complete expropriation of the higher classes of Ireland: which, if there is any truth in the principles we have laid down, would be perfectly warrantable, but only if it were the sole means of effecting a great public good. In the second place, that there should be none but peasant proprietors, is in itself far from desirable. Large farms, cultivated by large capital, and owned by persons of the best education which the country can give, persons qualified by instruction to appreciate scientific discoveries, and able to bear the delay and risk of costly experiments, are an important part of a good agricultural system. Many such landlords there are even in Ireland; and it would be a public misfortune to drive them from their posts. A large proportion also of the present holdings are probably still too small to try the proprietary system under the greatest advantages; nor are the tenants always the persons one would desire to select as the first occupants of peasant-properties. There are numbers of them on whom it would have a more beneficial effect to give them the hope of acquiring a landed property by industry and frugality, than the property itself in immediate possession.

There are, however, much milder measures, not open to similar objections, and which, if pushed to the utmost extent of which they are susceptible, would realize in no inconsiderable degree the object sought. One of them would be, to enact that whoever reclaims waste land becomes the owner of it, at a fixed quit-rent equal to a moderate interest on its mere value as waste. It would of course be a necessary part of this measure, to make compulsory on landlords the surrender of waste lands (not of an ornamental character) whenever required for reclamation. Another expedient, and one in which individuals could co-operate, would be to buy as much as

possession of the land offered for sale, and sell it again in small portions as peasant properties. A Society for this purpose was at one time projected (though the attempt to establish it proved unsuccessful) with the principles, so far as applicable, of the Freehold Land Societies which have been so successfully established in England, not primarily for agricultural but for electoral purposes.

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funds of the association would be liberated, and it might recommence operations in some other quarter.

§ 2. Thus far I had written in 1856. Since that time the great crisis of Irish industry has made further progress, and it is necessary to consider how its present state affects the opinions, on prospects or on practical measures, expressed in the previous part of this chapter.

The principal change in the situation consists in the great diminution, holding out a hope of the entire extinction, of cottier tenure. The enormous decrease in the number of small holdings, and increase in those of a medium size, attested by the statistical returns, sufficiently proves the general fact, and all testimonies show that the tendency still continues.* It is

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in previous reports, it is proved that the tenants, in general, improve their little farms, and increase their cultivation and crops, in nearly direct proportion to the number of available working persons of both sexes, of which their families consist."

There cannot be a stronger testimony to the superior amount of gross, and even of net produce, raised by small farming under any tolerable system of landed tenure; and it is worthy of attention that the industry and zeal were greatest among the smaller holders; Colonel Robinson noticing, as exceptions to the remarkable and rapid progress of improvement, some tenants who were "occupants of larger farms than twenty acres, a class too often deficient in the enduring industry indispensable for the successful prosecution of mountain improvements."

* There is, however, a partial counter-current, of which I have not seen any public notice. "A class of men, not very numerous, but sufficiently so to do much mischief, have, through the Landed Estates Court, got into possession of land in Ireland, who, of all classes, are least likely to recognise the duties of a landlord's position. These are small traders in towns, who by dint of sheer parsimony, frequently combined with money-lending at usurious rates, have succeeded, in the course of a long life, in scraping together as much money as will enable them to buy fifty or a hundred acres of land. These people never think of turning farmers, but, proud of their position as landlords, proceed to turn it to the utmost account. An instance of this kind came under my notice lately. The tenants on the property were, at the time of the purchase, some twelve years ago, in a tolerably comfortable state. Within that period their rent has been raised three several times; and it is now, as I am informed by the priest of the district, nearly double its amount at the commencement of the present proprietor's reign. The result is that the people, who were formerly in tolerable comfort, are now reduced to poverty: two of them have left the

probable that the repeal of the corn laws, necessitating a change in the exports of Ireland from the products of tillage to those of pasturage, would of itself have sufficed to bring about this revolution in tenure. A grazing farm can only be managed by a capitalist farmer, or by the landlord. But a change involving so great a displacement of the population, has been immensely facilitated and made more rapid by the vast emigration, as well as by that greatest boon ever conferred on Ireland by any Government, the Encumbered Estates Act; the best provisions of which have since, through the Landed Estates Court, been permanently incorporated into the social system of the country. The greatest part of the soil of Ireland, there is reason to believe, is now farmed either by the landlords, or by small capitalist farmers. That these farmers are improving in circumstances, and accumulating capital, there is

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property and squatted near an adjacent turf bog, where they exist trusting for support to occasional jobs. If this man is not shot, he will injure himself through the deterioration of his property, but meantime he has been getting eight or ten per cent on his purchase-money. This is by no means a rare case. The scandal which such occurrences cause, casts its reflection on transactions of a wholly different and perfectly legitimate kind, where the removal of the tenants is simply an act of mercy for all parties.

"The anxiety of landlords to get rid of cottiers is also to some extent neutralized by the anxiety of middlemen to get them. About one-fourth of the whole land of Ireland is held under long leases; the rent received, when the lease is of long standing, being generally greatly under the real value of the land. It rarely happens that land thus held is cultivated by the owner of the lease: instead of this, he sublets it at a rack rent to small men, and lives on the excess of the rent which he receives over that which he pays. Some of these leases are always running out; and as they draw towards their close, the middleman has no other interest in the land than, at any cost of permanent deterioration, to get the utmost out of it during the unexpired period of the term. For this purpose the small cottier tenants precisely answer his turn. Middlemen in this position are as anxious to obtain cottiers as tenants, as the landlords are to be rid of them; and the result is a transfer of this sort of tenant from one class of estates to the other. The movement is of limited dimensions, but it does exist, and so far as it exists, neutralizes the general tendency. Perhaps it may be thought that this system will reproduce itself; that the same motives which led to the existence of middlemen will perpetuate the class; but there is no danger of this. Landowners are now perfectly alive to the consequences of this system, however convenient for a time; and a clause becoming a matter of course in every lease."—

considerable evidence, in particular the great increase of deposits in the banks of which they are the principal customers. So far as that class is concerned, the chief thing still wanted is security of tenure, or assurance of compensation for improvements. The means of supplying these wants are now engaging the attention of the most competent minds; Judge Longfield's address, in the autumn of 1864, and the sensation created by it, are an era in the subject, and a point has now been reached when we may confidently expect that within a very few years something effectual will be done.

But what, meanwhile, is the condition of the displaced cottiers, so far as they have not emigrated; and of the whole class who subsist by agricultural labour, without the occupation of any land? As yet, their state is one of great poverty, with but slight prospect of improvement. Money wages, indeed, have risen much above the wretched level of a generation ago: but the cost of subsistence has also risen so much above the old potato standard, that the real improvement is not equal to the nominal; and according to the best information to which I have access, there is little appearance of an improved standard of living among the class. The population, in fact, reduced though it be, is still far beyond what the country can support as a mere grazing district of England. It may not, perhaps, be strictly true that, if the present number of inhabitants are to be maintained at home, it can only be either on the old vicious system of cottierism, or as small proprietors growing their own food. The lands which will remain under tillage would, no doubt, if sufficient security for outlay were given, admit of a more extensive employment of labourers by the small capitalist farmers; and this, in the opinion of some competent judges, might enable the country to support the present number of its population in actual existence. But no one will pretend that this resource is sufficient to maintain them in any condition in which it is fit that the great body of the peasantry of a country should exist. Accordingly the emigration, which for a time had fallen off, has, under the additional stimulus of bad seasons, revived in all its strength. It is calculated that within the year 1864 not less than 100,000 emigrants left the Irish shores. As far as regards the emigrants themselves and their pos-

terity, or the general interests of the human race, it would be folly to regret this result. The children of the immigrant Irish receive the education of Americans, and enter, more rapidly and completely than would have been possible in the country of their descent, into the benefits of a higher state of civilization. In twenty or thirty years they are not mentally distinguishable from other Americans. The loss, and the disgrace, are England's: and it is the English people and government whom it chiefly concerns to ask themselves, how far it will be to their honour and advantage to retain the mere soil of Ireland, but to lose its inhabitants. With the present feelings of the Irish people, and the direction which their hope of improving their condition seems to be permanently taking, England, it is probable, has only the choice between the depopulation of Ireland, and the conversion of a part of the labouring population into peasant proprietors. The truly insular ignorance of her public men respecting a form of agricultural economy which predominates in nearly every other civilized country, makes it only too probable that she will choose the worse side of the alternative. Yet there are germs of a tendency to the formation of peasant proprietors on Irish soil, which require only the aid of a friendly legislator to foster them; as is shown in the following extract from a private communication by my eminent and valued friend, Professor Cairnes:—

"On the sale, some eight or ten years ago, of the Thomond, Portarlington, and Kingston estates, in the Encumbered Estates Court, it was observed that a considerable number of occupying tenants purchased the fee of their farms. I have not been able to obtain any information as to what followed that proceeding—whether the purchasers continued to farm their small properties, or under the mania of landlordism tried to escape from their former mode of life. But there are other facts which have a bearing on this question. In those parts of the country where tenant-right prevails, the prices given for the goodwill of a farm are enormous. The following figures, taken from the schedule of an estate in the neighbourhood of Newry, now passing through the Landed Estates Court, will give an idea, but a very inadequate one, of the prices which this more customary right generally fetches

"Statement showing the prices at which the tenant-right of certain farms near Newry was sold:—

	Acres.	Rent.	Purchase-money of tenant-right.
Lot 1	23	£74	£33
2	24	77	240
3	13	39	110
4	14	34	85
5	10	33	172
6	5	13	75
7	8	26	130
8	11	33	130
9	2	5	5
	110	£334	£980

"The prices here represent on the whole about three years' purchase of the rental: but this, as I have said, gives but an inadequate idea of that which is frequently, indeed of that which is ordinarily, paid. The right, being purely customary, will vary in value with the confidence generally reposed in the good faith of the landlord. In the present instance, circumstances have come to light in the course of the proceedings connected with the sale of the estate, which give reason to believe that the confidence in this case was not high; consequently, the rates above given may be taken as considerably under those which ordinarily prevail. Cases, as I am informed on the highest authority, have in other parts of the country come to light, also in the Landed Estates Court, in which the price given for the tenant-right was equal to that of the whole fee of the land. It is a remarkable fact that people should be found to give, say twenty or twenty-five years' purchase, for land which is still subject to a good round rent. Why, it will be asked, do they not purchase land out and out for the same, or a slightly larger, sum? The answer to this question, I believe, is to be found in the state of our land laws. The cost of transferring land in small portions is, relatively to the purchase money, very considerable, even in the Landed Estates Court; while the goodwill of a farm may be transferred without any cost at all. The cheapest conveyance that could be drawn in that Court, where the utmost economy, consistent with the present mode of remunerating legal services, is strictly enforced, would, irrespective of stamp duties

cost 10*l.*—a very sensible addition to the purchase of a small peasant estate: a conveyance to transfer a thousand acres might not cost more, and would probably not cost much more. But in truth, the mere cost of conveyance represents but the least part of the obstacles which exist to obtaining land in small portions. A far more serious impediment is the complicated state of the ownership of land, which renders it frequently impracticable to subdivide a property into such portions as would bring the land within the reach of small bidders. The remedy for this state of things, however, lies in measures of a more radical sort than I fear it is at all probable that any House of Commons we are soon likely to see would even with patience consider. A registry of titles may succeed in reducing this complex condition of ownership to its simplest expression; but where real complication exists, the difficulty is not to be got rid of by mere simplicity of form; and a registry of titles —while the powers of disposition at present enjoyed by landowners remain undiminished, while every settler and testator has an almost unbounded licence to multiply interests in land, as pride, the passion for dictation, or mere whim may suggest—will, in my opinion, fail to reach the root of the evil. The effect of these circumstances is to place an immense premium upon large dealings in land—indeed in most cases practically to preclude all other than large dealings; and while this is the state of the law, the experiment of peasant proprietorship, it is plain, cannot be fairly tried. The facts, however, which I have stated, show, I think, conclusively, that there is no obstacle in the disposition of the people to the introduction of

SPEECH

ON MR CHICHESTER FORTESCUE'S

LAND BILL

MAY 17 1866

IT was in an auspicious hour for the futurity of Ireland, and of the Empire of which Ireland is so important a part, that a British Administration has introduced this Bill into Parliament. I venture to express the opinion that nothing which any Government has yet done, or which any Government has yet attempted to do, for Ireland—not even Catholic Emancipation itself—has shown so true a comprehension of Ireland's real needs, or has aimed so straight at the very heart of Ireland's discontent and of Ireland's misery. It is a fulfilment of the promise held out by the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the beginning of the Session, when, in discharging the painful duty of calling on Parliament to treat Ireland once more—let us hope for the last time—as a disaffected dependency, he declared his purpose, and that of the Government of which he is a Member, to legislate for Ireland according to Irish exigencies, and no longer according to English routine. To have no better guide than routine is not a safe thing in any case; but to make the routine of one country our guide in legislating for another, is a mode of conduct which, unless by a happy accident, cannot lead to good. It is a mistake which this country has often made—not perhaps so much from being more liable to it than other countries, as from having more opportunities of committing it: having been so often called on to legislate, and to frame systems of administration, for

dependencies very unlike itself. Sir, it is a problem of this sort which we still have before us when we attempt to legislate for Ireland. Not that Ireland is a dependency—those days are over; she is an integral part of a great self-governing nation: but a part, I venture to say, very unlike the remaining parts. I am not going to talk about natural differences, race and the like—the importance of which, I think, is very much exaggerated; but let any hon. gentleman consider what a different history Ireland has had from either England or Scotland, and ask himself whether that history must not have left its impress deeply engraven on Irish character. Consider again how different, even at this day, are the social circumstances of Ireland from those of England or Scotland; and whether such different circumstances must not often require different laws and institutions. People often ask—it has been asked this evening—why should that which works well in England not work well in Ireland? or why should anything be needed in Ireland which is not needed in England? Are Irishmen an exception to all the rest of mankind, that they cannot bear the institutions and practices which reason and experience point out as the best suited to promote national prosperity? Sir, we were eloquently reminded the other night of that double ignorance against which a great philosopher warned his cotemporaries—ignorance of our being ignorant. But when we insist on applying the same rules in every respect to Ireland and to England, we show another kind of double ignorance, and at the same time disregard a precept older than Socrates—the precept which was inscribed on the front of the Temple of Delphi: we not only do not know those whom we undertake to govern, but we do not know ourselves. No, Sir, Ireland is not an exceptional country; but England is. Irish circumstances and Irish ideas as to social and agricultural economy are the general ideas and circumstances of the human race; it is English circumstances and English ideas that are peculiar. Ireland is in the main stream of human existence and human feeling and opinion; it is England that is in one of the lateral channels. If any hon. gentleman doubts this, I ask, is there any other country on the face of the earth in which, not merely as an occasional fact, but as a general

rule, the land is owned in great estates by one class, and farmed by another class of capitalist farmers at money rents fixed by contract, while the actual cultivators of the soil are hired labourers, wholly detached from the soil, and receiving only day wages? Parts of other countries may be pointed out where something like this state of things exists as an exceptional fact, but Great Britain is the only country where it is the general rule. In all other places in which the cultivators have emerged from slavery, and from that modified form of slavery, serfage, and have not risen into the higher position of owning land in their own right, the labourer holds it, as in Ireland, directly from the landowner, and the intermediate class of well-to-do tenant-farmers has, as a general rule, no existence. Ireland is like the rest of the world, and England is the exceptional country. Then, if we are making rules for the common case, is it reasonable to draw our precedents from the exceptional one? If we are to be guided by experience in legislating for Ireland, it is Continental rather than English experience that we ought to consider, for it is on the Continent, and not in England, that we find anything like similarity of circumstances. And this explains why so much has been said in Ireland about tenant-right and fixity of tenure. For what does Continental experience tell us, as a matter of historical fact? It tells us that where this agricultural economy, in which the actual cultivator holds the land directly from the proprietor, has been found consistent with the good cultivation of the land or with the comfort and prosperity of the cultivators, the rent has not been determined, as it is in Ireland, merely by contract, but the occupier has had the protection of some sort of fixed usage. The custom of the country has determined more or less precisely the rent which he should pay, and guaranteed the permanence of his tenure as long as he paid it. Such a social and agricultural system as exists in Ireland has never, or next to never, succeeded without tenant-right and fixity of tenure. Do I therefore ask you to establish customary rents and fixity of tenure as the rule of occupancy in Ireland? Certainly not. It is perhaps a sufficient reason that I know you will not do it; but I am also aware that what may

be very wholesome when it grows up as a custom, approved and accepted by all parties, would not necessarily have the same success if, without having ever existed as a custom, it were to be enforced as a law. Only I warn you of this. Peasant farming, as a rule, never answers without fixity of tenure. If Ireland is ever to prosper with peasant farming, fixity of tenure is an indispensable condition. But you do not want to perpetuate peasant farming; you want to improve Ireland in another way. You prefer the English agricultural economy, and desire to establish that. The only mode of cultivation which seems to you beneficial is cultivation by well-to-do tenant-farmers and hired labourers. Well, Sir, there is a good deal to be said against this doctrine—it is very disputable, but I am not going to dispute it now. I accept this as the thing you have got to do, and assuming it to be desirable, I ask, how is it to be brought about? This is not the first time that a problem of this sort has been propounded. The French Economists of the 18th century—on the whole the most enlightened thinkers of their time—tried to deal with a state of things not unlike what you have to deal with; and they wanted exactly what you want. They had a wretched, down-trodden, half-starved race of peasant cultivators, and they wanted to have, instead of these, comfortable farmers. Some of the more enlightened of the great landlords of France adopted the doctrines of the Economists, and would gladly have carried them into practice; but nothing came of it, and the reform of the agricultural economy of France had to wait for a revolution. Now, to what do the best writers attribute the failure of these agricultural reformers? To this—that they aimed at putting farmers in the place of the peasants, when they should have aimed at raising the peasants into farmers. If you are going to succeed where they failed, it can only be by avoiding their error. Instead of bringing in capitalist farmers over the heads of the tenants, you have got to take the best of the present tenants, and elevate them into the comfortable farmers you want to have. You cannot evict a whole nation—the country would be too hot to hold you and your new tenants if you attempted it. And supposing even that things could be made smooth for e successors of

the existing peasantry by means of emigration, are you going to expatriate a whole people? Would any hon. gentleman desire to do that? Would he endure the thought of doing it? Supposing even that you sought to use the right of landed property for such a purpose, is there any human institution which could have such a strain put upon it and not snap? Well, then, how are the present tenantry, or the best of them, to be raised into a superior class of farmers? There is but one way, and this Bill which is before you affords the means. Give them what you can of the encouraging influences of ownership. Give them an interest in improvement. Enable them to be secure of enjoying the fruits of their own labour and outlay. Let their improvements be for their own benefit, and not solely for those whose land they till. There is no parallel problem to be resolved on this side of St. George's Channel. The system of tenancy in England is found to be at least not incompatible with agricultural improvement. In England and Scotland a large proportion of the landowners either give leases to their tenants which afford them sufficient time for reaping the benefit of whatever improvements they may make, or, when there are no leases, there is generally such a degree of confidence and mutual understanding between landlord and tenant, that they make their improvements in concert; or at all events the tenant, as a general rule, has no fear that the landlord will take an unfair advantage of him, and, by accepting a higher offer over his head, will possess himself without compensation of the increased value which the tenant has given to the land. This is the case in England: but how is it in Ireland? The reverse in all respects. There are few leases, except old and expiring ones, and no confidence at all between landlords and tenants. One-half of the landlords, or some other proportion of them, do not deserve confidence, and the consequence is that the tenants dare not trust the other half. If a tenant does trust his landlord, he does not trust, for he does not know, the next heir, or the stranger who may buy the property in the Landed Estates Court. The extent to which this want of confidence reaches is really one of the most remarkable facts in all history. There have been incontestable

proofs of late years that the tenant farmers of Ireland often possess a considerable amount of savings. Where do these savings go to? They go into banks of deposit; they go into the English funds; they go under the thatch; everywhere but to their natural investment, the farm. There is something, to my mind, almost tragical in this state of things. For the fact is decidedly honourable to Irish landlords that these savings have been made by their tenants; it exculpates a large proportion of them from the indiscriminate charges often brought against the entire class; it proves that a much greater number of them than has often been supposed are neither greedy nor grasping, do not rack-rent their tenants, or take the last farthing in payment of rent; and in spite of this, the tenants are so absolutely without confidence in them, that even the sums which the landlord's forbearance has enabled them to accumulate are sent away everywhere—are employed for any purpose —except the most obvious and natural purpose, the improvement of their farms. Now, are you going to let this state of things continue? If we all deplore it—if we all are ashamed of it—what remedy is there but one? Give the tenant compensation, awarded by an impartial tribunal, for whatever increased value—and only for the increased value—he has given to the land. Do not use the fruits of his labour or of his outlay without paying for them, or without giving him assurance of being paid for them. The Bill appoints an impartial tribunal. When the parties do not agree, the case is to be adjudged by authorities who even in Ireland deserve and possess the confidence alike of landlords and tenants. Valuers appointed by the Government Board of Works will decide in the first instance, and the assistant barrister, the stipendiary Chairman of Quarter Sessions, is the Judge in appeal. I believe no one doubts that such arbitrators as these would be impartial, and would be trusted by the Irish people. But the right hon. gentleman who spoke last (Mr. Lowe) said it was not so much the giving compensation he objected to, as to the fact that improvements might be made under the Bill, to which the consent of the landlord had not been previously obtained. That provision, however, if we consider the matter, is the very essence of

the Bill, and is indispensable to its operation. If improvements are only to be made by the landlord's permission, and on his voluntary promise of an indemnity, that can be done now; saving, indeed, some insufficiency in the legal power of a limited owner to bind his successors. But experience proves that when there is a want of confidence between landlords and tenants, improvements which require the previous consent of the landlord are not made at all. The tenant is afraid to serve a notice on his landlord. He is afraid to announce beforehand to the landlord that he is in a condition to make improvements, lest, being mostly a tenant-at-will, he should be thought to be also in a condition to pay a higher rent. Or he fears that the landlord will do what some landlords have been known to do—withhold his assent, on the speculation that the tenant may make the improvement notwithstanding, and the landlord may be able to profit by it without paying any indemnity. Or he thinks that the landlord may dislike an improving tenant, from a mere wish to keep his tenantry in a state of dependence. And what does the landlord sacrifice by renouncing the condition of previous consent? Nothing whatever but the power of taking for himself the fruits of the labour of others. He will still be free to improve the estate himself, if he can and will. But if he does not, and his tenant does, he will be prevented from appropriating the value which the tenant has created, without paying him an equivalent. What he will have to pay, will be determined not by the outlay of the tenant, but by value actually added to the farm by the tenant's labour or outlay, in the opinion of an impartial tribunal. It is of no consequence how much the tenant may have expended; unless he has made the land worth more money to the landlord for the landlord's uses, he will receive nothing. Even in such a case as that to which the right hon. gentleman alluded, and to which reference was frequently made before the Committee—the case of a landlord wishing to consolidate his farms, and the buildings erected by the tenant not being required when such consolidation takes place—this circumstance would be taken into consideration by the valuer, and the tenant would have to bear the loss. Indeed, in no case would the

landlord sustain any pecuniary loss. He would simply have to pay for value received. The objection is what would be called, on almost any subject but the present, a purely abstract objection. The Bill is thought to violate a certain abstract right of property in land. I call it an abstract right, meaning that it is of no value to the possessor though it is hurtful to other people. Of what earthly use to any landed proprietor is the right of preventing improvement? It is the right of the dog in the manger. Yet, wonderful to relate, even this the Bill does not take away; it leaves to the landlord the power of preventing the tenant's improvements by a previous stipulation. But it does this in the confidence—I believe the well-grounded confidence—that the power will seldom be used, except when there is something to justify it in the special circumstances of the case. The framers of the Bill place a just reliance in the influence of a sound moral principle when once embodied in the law. They know that there is a great difference between requiring the tenant to ask permission from the landlord to make improvements, and throwing the onus on the landlord of prohibiting by anticipation a public benefit, which the law, if this Bill passes, will have declared its purpose of encouraging. I maintain, Sir, that the claim of the improver to the value of his improvements, so far from conflicting with the right of property in land, is a right of the very same description as landed property, and rests on the same foundation. What is the ground and justification of landed property? I am afraid some hon. Members think that I am going to give utterance to some grave heresy on this subject. At least, those hon. gentlemen who have been so obliging as to advertise my writings on an unexampled scale, and entirely free of expense either to myself or the publisher, seemed to be much scandalized by some passages they had discovered, to the effect that landed property must be more limited in its nature than other proprietary rights, because no man made the land. Well, Sir, did any man make the land? If not, did any man acquire it by gift, or by bequest, or by inheritance, or by purchase, from the maker of it? These, I apprehend, are the foundations of the right to other property. Then what is the

foundation of the right to property in land? The answer commonly made to this question is enough for me, and I agree in it. Though no man made the land, men, by their industry, made the valuable qualities of it; they reclaimed it from the waste, they brought it under cultivation, they made it useful to man, and so acquired as just a title to it as men have to what they have themselves made. Very well: I have nothing to say against this. But why, I ask, is this right, which is acquired by improving the land, to be for ever confined to the person who first improved it? If it requires improving again, and some one does improve it again, does not this new improver acquire a kind of right akin to that of the original improver? Of course I do not pretend that when one person has acquired a right to land by improving it, another, by improving it again, can oust the first man of his right. But neither do I admit that the man who has once improved a piece of land, acquires thereby an indefeasible right to prevent any one else from improving it for the whole remainder of eternity; or a right to profit, without cost to himself, by improvements which some one else has made. Landed property in its origin had nothing to rest upon but the moral claim of the improver to the value of his improvement; and unless we recognise on the same ground a kindred claim in the temporary occupier, we give up the moral basis on which landed property rests, and leave it without any justification but that of actual possession—a title which can be pleaded for every possible abuse. We have heard a good deal lately about "thoughtful Reformers." It seems there are a great many thoughtful Reformers in this House—some of them very thoughtful ones indeed. I wish there were as many thoughtful Conservatives; but I am afraid they keep most of their thoughtfulness for Reform. However, we know there are thoughtful Conservatives, and they cannot be all on this side of the House. Let me remind them of a writer with whose works they must all of them be familiar—the most thoughtful mind that ever tried to give a philosophic basis to English Conservatism—the late Mr. Coleridge. In his second Lay Sermon, this eminent Conservative propounds a theory of property in land, compared with which anything which I ever hinted at is the merest

milk and water. His idea of landed property is, that it is a kind of public function—a trust rather than a property—which the owner is morally justified in using for his own advantage, only after certain great social ends, connected with the cultivation of the country and the well-being of its inhabitants, have been amply fulfilled. I am not claiming anything comparable to this. All I ask is, that the improvement of the country and the well-being of the people may be attended to, when they are proved not to be inconsistent with the pecuniary interest of the landowners. This modest demand is the only one I make; because I believe, and because it is believed by those who are better judges of the condition of Ireland than I can pretend to be, that no more than this is necessary to cure the existing evils. Sir, the House has now a golden opportunity. When I think how small a thing it is which is now asked of us, and when I hear, as I have heard, Members of this House, usually classed as of extreme opinions—men who are Irish of the Irish, who have the full confidence of what is called the National party—when such men assure us that the tenantry, who have been scarcely touched by any of the things you have hitherto done for the benefit of Ireland, will, as they hope, and as they think there is ground to believe, be reconciled to their lot, and changed from a discontented, if not disloyal, to a hopeful and satisfied part of the nation, by so moderate—I had almost said so minute—a concession as that which is now proposed; I confess I am amazed that those who have suffered so long and so bitterly are able to be conciliated or calmed by so small a gift; and deplorable would it indeed be if so small a gift were refused to them. Even if we ourselves had not full confidence in this remedy, there is nothing in it so alarming that we need be afraid to try, as an experiment, what is so ardently wished for by a country to which we owe so much reparation that she ought to be the spoilt child of this country for a generation to come—to be treated not only with justice but with generous indulgence. I am speaking in the presence of many who listened, like myself, to that touching speech which was delivered on the last night of the Reform debate, by the hon. Member for Tralee (The O'Donoghue)—when he, who is so well

entitled to speak in the name of the Irish people, and of that portion of them of whom we have had the hardest thoughts, and who have had the hardest thoughts of us, held out his hand to us and declared that if there is even one party in this House and in this country who reciprocate the feeling he then showed, and really regard the Irish as fellow-countrymen, they will be fellow-countrymen to us—they will labour and contend by our side, have the same objects with us, look forward to the same and not to a different future, and let the dream of a separate nationality remain a dream. Many, I am sure, must have felt as I felt while I listened to his eloquent and feeling words, that if this House only wills it, that speech is the beginning of a new era. Let us not fling away in want of thought—for it is not want of heart—the reconciliation so frankly tendered. History will not say that we of the present generation are unwilling to govern Ireland as she ought to be governed:—let us not go down to posterity with the contemptible reputation of being unable to do so. Let it not be said of us that, with the best possible intentions towards Ireland, no length of time or abundance of experience could teach us to understand her—whether it is insular narrowness, making us incapable of imagining that Ireland's exigencies could be in any way different from England's; or because the religious respect we cherish for everything which has the smallest savour of a right of property, has degenerated, as is sometimes the case with other religions, into a superstition. Let us show that our principles of government are not a mere generalization from English facts; but that in legislating for Ireland we can take into account Irish circumstances: and that our care for landed property is an intelligent regard for its essentials, and for the ends it fulfils, and not a servile prostration before its mere name.

SPEECH

ON MR MAGUIRE'S MOTION

ON THE STATE OF IRELAND

MARCH 12 1868

IT was with a feeling, I will not say of disappointment—because there can be no disappointment where there has not previously been hope—but of regret, that I witnessed the "beggarly account of empty boxes" which the Government has laid before us, instead of an Irish policy. My dissatisfaction was not so much with what they did, or what they refused to do, on the subject of the land—although I look upon that question as outweighing all the rest put together, and I believe that without a satisfactory dealing with it, nothing can be done which will be at all effectual. I am afraid the time is far distant when it would be fair to expect that a Government, and especially a Conservative Government, should be found in advance of public opinion—which I cannot deny that the present Government would be, if they were to propose such a measure on the Irish Land question as I conceive would alone be effectual to settle it. But what we have a right to expect even from a Conservative Government, at all events from a Conservative Government which professes a Liberal policy—even with the qualifying adjunct, "truly Liberal"—is that they shall be on a level with the opinion of the people: and this they most assuredly are not, on the subject of the Irish Church. If there ever was a question on which I might say the whole human race has made up its mind, it is this. I concur in every word that was said, and every feeling that was expressed,

by my right hon. friend the Member for Calne (Mr. Lowe) on this subject: and I thank him from my heart for his manly and outspoken declaration in reference to that great scandal and iniquity, which was so well described by the right hon. gentleman now at the head of the Government (Mr. Disraeli), in a speech which, although last year he endeavoured to explain away, I am not aware that he has ever disavowed. It is an institution which could not be submitted to by any country, except at the point of the sword. Now, on this subject the Government have not shown themselves altogether inflexible. The noble Lord the Chief Secretary for Ireland has expressed his willingness in some degree to entertain the principle of religious equality, and I thank him for it; but, as has been remarked by my hon. friend the Member for Manchester (Mr. Jacob Bright), he proposed to do it —if at all—by levelling up instead of levelling down. The noble Lord is willing that every valley should be exalted; but he does not go on to the succeeding clause, and say that every mountain and hill shall be laid low. So long as the national property which is administered by the Episcopal Church of Ireland is not diverted from its present purpose, the noble Lord has no objection at all to this country's saddling itself with the endowment of another great hierarchy, which, if effected on the principle of religious equality, would be a great deal more costly than even that which now exists. Does the noble Lord really think it possible that the people of England will submit to this? I may be permitted, as one who, in common with many of my betters, have been subjected to the charge of being Utopian, to congratulate the Government on having joined that goodly company. It is, perhaps, too complimentary to call them Utopians, they ought rather to be called dys-topians, or cacotopians. What is commonly called Utopian is something too good to be practicable; but what they appear to favour is too bad to be practicable. Not only would England and Scotland never submit to it, but the Roman Catholic clergy of Ireland refuse it. They will not take your bribe. As in many other things I differ from the hon. and learned Member for Oxford (Mr. Neate), who moved the Amendment, so my opinion on the subject of Irish

remedies is directly contrary to his. Whereas the hon. and learned Member thinks that the real obstacle to the peace and prosperity of Ireland is the proposal of extravagant and impossible remedies, my opinion, on the contrary, is that the real obstacle is not the proposal of extravagant and impossible remedies, but the persistent unwillingness of the House even to look at any remedy which they have pre-judged to be extravagant and impossible. When a country has been so long in possession of full power over another, as this country has over Ireland, and still leaves it in the state of feeling which now exists in Ireland, there is a strong presumption that the remedy required must be much stronger and more drastic than any which has yet been applied. All the presumption is in favour of the necessity of some great change. Great and obstinate evils require great remedies. If the House does not think so—if it still has faith in small remedies, I exhort it to make haste and adopt them. It has already lost a great deal of time. Counting from 1829, which was the time when this country first began to govern Ireland, or even to profess to govern Ireland, for the sake of Ireland, thirty-nine years have elapsed, and during that time, although there may have been some material progress, as there has been everywhere else, moral progress, in reconciling Ireland to our Government, and to the Union with us, has not been made, and does not seem likely soon to be made, unless we change our policy. Hon. gentlemen prefer to soothe themselves with statistics, flattering themselves with the idea that Ireland is improving, and that the evil was greater at some former time than it is now. My right hon. friend the Member for Calne has told us that we have no occasion to care for Fenianism, and that it is not of any consequence. I do not suppose my right hon. friend thinks that the remedies proposed by me or any one else for the benefit of Ireland are intended to conciliate the Fenians. I know very little of the Fenians. I do not pretend to know what their opinions are, nor do I believe my right hon. friend knows them a bit better. We do know, however, that they desire what I greatly deprecate—a violent separation of Ireland from this country; and they desire this with such bitterness and animosity that there is no chance of conciliating

them. But the peculiar and growing danger in the state of Ireland is this—that there is nearly universal discontent, and very general disaffection. Hon. gentlemen need not flatter themselves that this is an evil which can be safely disregarded. Ireland has had rebellions before. As a rebellion this recent one is nothing—it is contemptible. A great deal has been said about the circumstance that no person of consequence, personally or socially, has put himself at the head of it. It was not likely that any one who had anything to lose would do so. Is it within the range of possibility that an insurrection could be successful in Ireland at this particular time? What does Mitchel himself say of it? This is the reason why every one who has something to lose (and every one who is an occupant of land has something to lose) will not, until he sees a greater chance of success, countenance rebellion, or throw any other difficulty in the way of suppressing it than by sheltering from the police those who are involved in it. That is not the danger. The danger is one of which there is the strongest evidence. My own information is derived from many trustworthy persons, not of extreme opinions, persons whose idea of remedial measures for Ireland falls far short of mine, but who are unanimously of opinion that the state of Ireland is more dangerous at this moment than at any former period, and that the feeling of the people is one of general discontent and wide disaffection. Gentlemen who hold land in Ireland do not think so; but they would be the last persons to find it out. Persons in possession of power are usually the last to find out what is thought of them by their inferiors. They awake from their dream and find it out when they little expect it. There are two circumstances which make the disaffection more alarming at this time than at any former period since the rebellion of 1798. One is a circumstance which has never existed before. For the first time, the discontent in Ireland rests on a background of several millions of Irish across the Atlantic. This is a fact which is not likely to diminish. The number of Irish in America is constantly increasing. Their power to influence the political conduct of the United States is increasing, and will daily increase; and is there any probability that the American-Irish will come to hate this country less than they do at

the present moment? The noble Lord the Chief Secretary for Ireland said truly that many Irish go to our colonies, and that they remain loyal. But why? The Irish who go to those colonies find everything there which they seek in vain here. They have the land; they have no sectarian church; they have even a separate Legislature. All this they have under the British Crown and the British flag. If you gave all this to Ireland the people would be tranquil enough there. They will be so with much less than that; but those who go to America, on the contrary, will be loyal only to the American Government, while their feeling towards England is, and must be, directly opposite to that of the Irish who go to Australia and the other English Colonies. That is one most serious cause of danger in Ireland. Another is that the disaffection has become, more than at any former period, one of nationality. The Irish were taught that feeling by Englishmen. England has only even professed to treat the Irish people as part of the same nation with ourselves, since 1800. How did we treat them before that time? I will not go into the subject of the penal laws, because it may be said that those laws affected the Irish not as Irish but as Catholics. I will only mention the manner in which they were treated merely as Irish. I grant that, for these things, no man now living has any share of the blame; we are all ashamed of them; but "the evil that men do lives after them." First of all, this House declared the importation of Irish cattle a public nuisance. When we refused to receive Irish cattle, the Irish thought they would slaughter and salt them, to try whether we would receive them in that shape. But that was not allowed. Then they thought that if they could not send the cattle or the flesh, they might send the hides in the form of leather. No; that was not allowed either. Being thus denied admission for cattle in any shape, they tried if they might be allowed to do anything with respect to sheep; and they commenced exporting wool to this country. No; we would not take their wool. Then they began to manufacture it, and tried if we would take the manufactured article. This was worst of all, and we compelled our deliverer, William III., of "pious and immortal memory," to promise his Parliament that he would put

down the Irish woollen manufacture. This was not, I think, a brotherly course, or at all like treating Ireland as a part of the same nation. If we had been determined to impress upon Ireland in the strongest manner that she was regarded as a totally different and hostile nation, that was exactly the course to pursue. In fact, Ireland was treated in that thoroughly heathenish manner in which it was then customary for nations to treat other nations whom they had conquered—with the feeling that the dependent nation had no rights which the superior nation was bound to respect. It is unjust, however, to call that feeling heathenish, since it belonged only to the worst times of heathenism, before the Stoic philosophy—before the great, the immortal Marcus Antoninus proclaimed the kinship of all mankind. From the year 1800, these things began to change; but down to 1829 it may be said that though in some sense we treated Ireland as a sister, it was as sister Cinderella. Dust and ashes were good enough for her; purple and fine linen were reserved for her sisters. From 1829, however, we ceased to govern Ireland in that way. From that time there has been no feeling in this country with respect to Ireland, but a continuance of the really sisterly feeling which then commenced. Since that time it has been the sincere desire of all parties in England to govern Ireland for her good; but we have grievously failed in knowing how to set about it. Let me take a brief review of the things done for Ireland during that time. They may be easily counted. First, we made the landlord the tithe-proctor. That was a right thing to do; it prevented a great deal of bloodshed, and an enormous amount of annoyance and disaffection. I only wish it had been done before it had become practically impossible to collect the tithes in the old way. But, after all, this was merely changing the mode of taking something from the Irish people: it was not taking less. Next, we gave to Ireland a really unsectarian education. Ireland, long before England, received from us an elementary education which came down to the lowest grade of the people; and by degrees she also obtained unsectarian education in the higher branches. This is the most solid, and by far the greatest benefit we have yet conferred upon Ireland: and this, if the pro-

posal of the Government is adopted, we are going in a great measure to give up. In your difficulties, this is what you are going to throw over. You are going, in a great measure, to sacrifice the best thing you have done for Ireland, to save the bad things. The third thing did more credit to our kindness and generosity than to our wisdom. It was the £8,000,000—ultimately amounting to £10,000,000—that we gave at the time of the Irish famine, for the relief of the destitution in that country. Nobody will say that it was not right to give it; but I do not think that a people ever laid out £8,000,000 or £10,000,000 to meet an immediate emergency, in a manner calculated to do so very minute a quantity of permanent good. We were lavish in the amount that we expended. We certainly saved many lives—though there were probably a greater number that we could not save—and for that we are entitled to all credit. In a case of desperate distress there is in this country no grudging of money. All parties are united in that respect. But when circumstances obliged us to lay out this great sum, we had an opportunity of doing permanent good, by reclaiming the waste lands of Ireland for the benefit of the people of Ireland; and if we had done that, we should probably never have heard anything about fixity of tenure in the shape in which we hear of it now. At that time there was a sufficient quantity of waste land in Ireland to have enabled us to establish a large portion of the Irish population, by their own labour, in the condition of peasant proprietors of the land which they would themselves have reclaimed. We lost that opportunity, and we lost it for ever: because since that time fully one half of all the reclaimable waste land which existed at the time of Sir Richard Griffith's survey has been reclaimed; that is, it has been got hold of by the landlords; it has been reclaimed for the landlords, mainly, or very largely, by the aid of public money lent to them for the purpose. Therefore, it is no longer possible to produce these great results in Ireland merely by reclaiming the waste lands. The opportunity lost never can be regained; and now, therefore, you are asked to do much larger, and, as it appears to you, much more revolutionary things. There is only one more thing that we have done which is worth mentioning, and that is the Encumbered Estates Act. The Encum-

bered Estates Act was a statesmanlike measure; it was a measure admirably conceived, and excellent, provided it had been combined with other measures. Even as it was, it was in many respects a very valuable measure. In the first place, it effected a very great simplification of title. In the next, it to a great extent liberated Ireland from the great evil of needy landlords. But there is another side to the matter. The Act has had another effect, which was not, I believe, anticipated by anybody, at least to the extent to which it has been realized. It has shown to Ireland that there might be a still greater evil than needy landlords—namely, grasping landlords. Those who have bought estates under the Act are, I believe, in the great majority of cases, much harder landlords than their predecessors; and naturally so, because they had no previous connexion with the localities in which the estates they have purchased are situated. They were strangers—I do not mean to Ireland—but to the neighbourhood of their new properties. Many of them came from the towns. At all events, they had no connexion with the tenants, and did not feel that the tenants had any moral claim upon them, beyond the claim—a claim they ought to have recognised—which all who are dependent on us have upon us. They bought the land as a mere pecuniary speculation, and have very generally administered it as a mere speculation. Not unfrequently the first step they took was to raise the rents to the utmost possible amount, and in many cases they have ejected tenants because they could not pay those rents. These, then, are the things that we have done, since we began to do the best we could, the best we knew how to do, for Ireland; and I do not think they are well calculated to remove from the minds of the Irish people the bitterness which had been produced by our previous mode of government. If you say that there was nothing better to be done, you confess your incompetency to govern Ireland. I maintain that there is no country under heaven which it is not possible to govern, and to govern in such a way that it shall be contented. If there was anything better to be done, and you would not do it, your confession is still worse. But I do you more justice than you do yourselves. I believe that if small measures would have sufficed you would have granted them; and

it is because small measures will not suffice, because you must have large measures, because you must look at the thing on a much larger scale than you now do, because you must be willing to take into consideration what you think extravagant proposals—it is because of that, and not from any want of good intentions, that you have failed. The present state of Ireland is, I hope, gradually convincing you, if it does not do so all at once, that you must do something on a much larger scale than you have ever acted upon before, whether the particular things proposed to you are the right things or not. It is under this conviction that I have thought it my duty not to keep back three-fourths of what I believe to be the truth in regard to Ireland, for fear of prejudicing minor measures which the very people who propose them do not expect to produce any very large results. As to the plan which I have proposed—and whether hon. gentlemen think that it is right or wrong, surely they will admit that it is good to have it discussed—as to that plan, it seems necessary that I should in the first place state what it is; for it does not appear to have been at all correctly understood by most of those who have attacked it, and least of all by the noble Lord the Chief Secretary for Ireland. When I listened to his speech, I did not recognise my own plan. It is evident that the arduous duties of his important position had not left him time to read my pamphlet, and that he had been compelled to trust to the representation of some one who had given him a very unfaithful account of it. The noble Lord seemed to think that my plan was that the State should buy the land from the present proprietors, and re-sell or re-let it to the tenants. Now, I have said nothing whatever about buying the land. I should think it extremely objectionable to make that a part of the plan. I do not want the rent-charge to be bought up by the tenants, because that would absorb the capital which I hope to see them employ in the improvement of the land. There is another mistake which seems to have been made pretty generally. Those who have objected to my proposal have always argued as if I was going to force perpetuity of tenure on unwilling tenants. I propose nothing of the sort. There are at present in Ireland a very great number of tenants who do not pay a full rent. The most improving landlords

are precisely those who are the most moderate in their exactions. Now, it is an indispensable part of my plan that perpetuity should only be granted at a full rent—a fair rent, not an excessive, but still a full rent; and probably, therefore, many of these tenants will prefer to remain as they are. They might not do so if they were never to have another chance of gaining a perpetuity; but as according to my plan they would retain the power of claiming a perpetuity at any future time, on a valuation to be then made, I think it extremely likely that many would wish to go on as they are. Many landlords, too, might prefer to arrange amicably with their tenants at something less than a full rent, in order to retain the present relations with them: and these, I believe, would be the best landlords, the most improving landlords, those who are on the best terms with their tenants, and whom it is most important to retain in the country. Many practical objections have been raised to the plan, to all of which I believe that I have answers; but there is a preliminary question that I should like to ask. Does the House really wish that these difficulties should be met? Because it is very possible that in the minds of hon. gentlemen the question may be concluded and closed by a preliminary objection; such, for instance, as that it is an interference with the rights of property. If hon. gentlemen are determined by this single circumstance—if this is enough to make them absolutely resist and condemn the plan—it is probable that they would be rather sorry than glad if it is possible to answer the practical objections, and show that the plan would work; and in that case I cannot expect to have a very favourable or very unprejudiced audience when I attempt to answer them. And then there is another sort of preliminary objection: that which was made by my right hon. friend the Member for Calne, in the name of political economy. In my right hon. friend's mind political economy appears to stand for a particular set of practical maxims. To him it is not a science, it is not an exposition, not a theory of the manner in which causes produce effects: it is a set of practical rules, and these practical rules are indefeasible. My right hon. friend thinks that a maxim of political economy if good in England must be good in Ireland. But that is

like saying that because there is but one science of astronomy, and the same law of gravitation holds for the earth and the planets, therefore the earth and the planets do not move in different orbits. So far from being a set of maxims and rules, to be applied without regard to times, places, and circumstances, the function of political economy is to enable us to find the rules which ought to govern any state of circumstances with which we have to deal—circumstances which are never the same in any two cases. I do not know in political economy, more than I know in any other art, a single practical rule that must be applicable to all cases; and I am sure that no one is at all capable of determining what is the right political economy for any country until he knows its circumstances. My right hon. friend perhaps thinks that what is good political economy for England must be good for India—or perhaps for the savages in the back woods of America. My right hon. friend has been very plain spoken, and I will be plain spoken too. Political economy has a great many enemies; but its worst enemies are some of its friends, and I do not know that it has a more dangerous enemy than my right hon. friend. It is such modes of argument as he is in the habit of employing that have made political economy so thoroughly unpopular with a large and not the least philanthropic portion of the people of England. In my right hon. friend's mind, political economy seems to exist as a bar even to the consideration of anything that is proposed for the benefit of the economic condition of any people in any but the old ways: as if science was a thing not to guide our judgment, but to stand in its place—a thing which can dispense with the necessity of studying the particular case, and determining how a given cause will operate under its circumstances. Political economy has never in my eyes possessed this character. Political economy in my eyes is a science by means of which we are enabled to form a judgment as to what each particular case requires; but it does not supply us with a ready-made judgment upon any case, and there cannot be a greater enemy to political economy than he who represents it in that light. I will presume, therefore, that the House will not be unwilling to allow me to state what answer I can make to the practical objections to my plan.

First, there is the objection founded upon the sacredness of property. That is a feeling which I respect. But the sacredness of property is not violated by taking away property for the public good, if full compensation is given; and the interference that I propose is not more an interference, it is not even so much an interference, with property, as taking land for public improvements. Then, too, a man's right to his property is sacred; but is not a man's right to his person still more sacred? And yet no man is allowed to dispose of his person—in marriage, for instance—except in such way as the law provides; nor will it allow him to relieve himself from the contract, except on very special grounds, to be decided on by a Court of Justice. To those hon. gentlemen who are fond of applying the term confiscation to the plan that I propose, I will say that I recal them to the English language. I assure them that it is possible to argue against any proposition, if need be, and to refute what we think wrong, without altering the meaning of words, by doing which people only succeed in imposing upon themselves and others. How can that be confiscation in which the "fisc" instead of receiving anything, has only to pay; by which no individual will be the poorer, but many, I hope, a good deal richer? It may be objectionable, but that is a matter of argument; it may be undesirable, because the case may not be deemed strong enough to require it; but let us fight against opinions from which we differ without extending the war to the English language. I recommend to hon. gentlemen to be always strictly conservative of the English tongue. I will now come to arguments of a more practical kind. I will first mention the strongest argument I have ever heard, either in this House or elsewhere, against my plan—namely, that if we substitute the Government in the place of the present proprietors, we shall expose the Government to great difficulties, and make it still more unpopular than it has ever yet been. I have two answers to make to this objection, and if hon. gentlemen are not impressed by the one they may perhaps be convinced by the other. Undoubtedly, if the proposal is not received by the tenants as a great boon—if they do not think that perpetuity of tenure on the terms I have suggested is a gift worth accepting, then

I admit that there is nothing to say in favour of my plan; it would be idle to propose it. If, when we offer to the tenantry of Ireland that which they desire more than anything else in the world—a perfect security of tenure—the certainty that they will never have more to pay than they pay at first—that everything which their industry produces shall belong to them alone—if they do not think that a boon worth having, I have nothing more to say. But this is a most improbable supposition. A similar prediction was made about the serfs of Russia. Many people said and believed that the emancipated serfs would never consent to pay rent, especially to the Government, for land which they had been accustomed to receive gratis when in their servile condition. That was the general prediction; but we do not hear that the prediction has been fulfilled. Everything seems to be going on smoothly, and the serfs, as far as is known, pay their rents regularly. This, then, is one answer. I have another which is more decisive. If it is thought that it will not do to make the Government a substitute for the landlord, I answer that this is an objection affecting only the smallest part of my plan—an additional provision, not for the benefit of the tenant, but for the convenience and consolation of the landlords—that they should be allowed to receive their rents from the public Treasury. If, after the rent is converted into a rent-charge, it be thought that the landlords should, like other rent-chargers, be left to the ordinary law of the country to collect their dues, by all means leave them to the ordinary legal remedies. If it be thought injurious to the public interest to give the proposed consolation to the landlords, then do not give it. So falls to the ground a full half of the dissertation of the right hon. Member for Calne on the fatal consequences of the plan. But I must say that I do not believe the landlords as a body would wish to exchange their present condition for that of being mere receivers of dividends from the State. I observe that those who argue against any plan supposed to be contrary to the interest of landlords, invariably assume that the landlords are destitute of every spark of patriotic feeling. I do not think so. I believe that a large proportion of the landlords would prefer to retain their connexion with the land; that they would make private

arrangements with their tenants on terms more favourable to them than my plan would give, and that so Ireland would retain a large proportion of the best class of landlords. Another objection made against my plan is, that many of the holdings are too small. But Lord Dufferin states in his pamphlet that the consolidation of small holdings has ceased—that the number of separate holdings has not diminished in the last fifteen years. We may conclude from this that the holdings, generally speaking, are as large as is required by the present state of the industry and capital of Ireland; because, if that were not so, I cannot but believe that the movement of consolidation would still be going on. I perfectly admit that a great many tenants hold smaller holdings than could be desired. But if the holdings are so small that the tenants cannot live on them, and, at the same time, pay the amount of rent that would be required, they will soon fall into arrears; and, if they fall into arrears, it is a necessary part of my plan that they should be ejected. This would enable the landlord, if he thought fit, in every case of eviction, to consolidate farms; and whether he did so or not, the consequence would be the substitution of a better class of tenants. It is part of my plan that the landlord, if the holding were forfeited by non-payment of the rent-charge, should choose the tenant's successor, and that the consent of the landlord should be necessary to any sale of the occupier's interest. Another objection which has been urged is, that in Ireland lands held on long leases are always the worst farmed. Now, these are almost always old leases, granted to middlemen. These middlemen hold the farms at low rents; but I never heard that they granted leases at low rents to the sub-tenants; and who on earth would or could improve under competition rents? What interest has a man in improving, who has promised a rent he can never pay, and who therefore knows that, lease or no lease, he may be turned out at any moment? If the farmers have undertaken to pay a rent equal to double what they make from the land, is it likely that they will exert themselves to double the produce, merely for the benefit of the landlord? One of the most extraordinary circumstances connected with the attack made on my plan by my right hon. friend the Member for Calne, is that he went on ascribing all manner of

evil effects to peasant proprietorship, and yet from the beginning to the end of his speech he never made allusion to any of the arguments in their favour. One would have thought that he had never heard the common and principal argument, that the sentiment of property, the certainty that they are working for themselves, is the most powerful of all incentives to labour and frugality. This is the universal experience of every country where peasant proprietorship exists. And this brings me to the noble Lord the Chief Secretary for Ireland, who gave three reasons why peasant proprietorship is not desirable. These reasons were, that it does not prevent revolution, that it does not obviate famine, and that it leads to great indebtedness on the part of the holders. In regard to the first of these reasons, the case which the noble Lord appealed to, that of France, is certainly not in his favour; for in France the revolutions have not been made by the peasant proprietors, but by the artizans; all that the peasant proprietors have had to do with them being to put them down. Whether it was right or wrong—whether it was for good or evil—to substitute the present Government of France for the Republic, it was the peasant proprietors who did it. As to the co-existence of great famines and small properties, the noble Lord was rather unhappy in the instance he gave of East Prussia, for it so happens that East Prussia is not a country of peasant proprietors, there being next to no small properties there. It is the Rhine Provinces of Prussia that are a country of small proprietors, and the noble Lord did not tell us of any famine there. With reference to the argument as to the indebtedness of the small proprietors, I rather think the noble Lord is indebted to me for one instance he gave—that of the canton of Zurich; but in adducing that instance he omitted to mention the testimony given, by the same author, to the "superhuman" industry of the peasant proprietors there. If we take the instance generally appealed to on this subject, that of France; M. Léonce de Lavergne stated some ten years ago that the mortgages on the landed property of France did not on the average exceed 10 per cent of its value, and on the rural property did not exceed five per cent; and he estimated the burthen of interest at 10 per cent of the income. He added that these burthens

were not increasing, but diminishing. It is true that this average is taken from all the landed properties in France, and not solely from the small properties; but the large proprietors must be very unlike other large landed proprietors if their estates are not generally burthened to at least this extent, so that the average is probably fairly applicable to the small properties. With regard to the danger of sub-letting, what motive would a tenant have to sub-let? He could only sub-let at the rent he himself paid, unless he had in the meantime improved his holding, and if he had done so he would have a good right to be allowed to realize his improvements, if he pleased, by sub-letting at an increased rent. It is thought that even if he did not sub-let, he would subdivide. But to suppose that subdivision would be general, is to ignore altogether one of the strongest motives that can operate on the mind. There is nothing like the possession of a property in the land by the actual cultivator, for inspiring him with industry and a desire to accumulate. It is not necessary to suppose that this influence would operate on the whole body of tenant proprietors. If it acted only on one-half, a great deal would be gained. Let hon. gentlemen consider what an accumulation of savings there is in the hands of Irish farmers. I must say that it reflects great credit on the landlords of Ireland, taken as a body, that the tenants should have been able to accumulate such almost incredible sums as it is admitted that they have. Well, what is done with these savings? The farmer carries them anywhere but to the farm. They are invested in everything but the improvement of his holding; showing that the very landlords through whose forbearance these sums have been accumulated, are not trusted by the tenants; or, if they trust the landlord himself, they do not trust his heir, whom they do not know, or his creditor who may come into possession, or the stranger to whom he may be obliged to sell. But under the small proprietary system, these sums would be brought out and applied to the farms, and there is enough of them to make all Ireland blossom like the rose. Tenants who had given such proof of forethought would be more likely to provide for their younger sons by buying more land than by subdividing their own holdings. Moreover, it must be re-

membered that a bridge has now been built to America, over which the younger sons might cross. According to the testimony of Lord Dufferin, marriages are already less early in Ireland than they used to be, and many farmers have become sensible of the disadvantage

with the purely grazing farms on some other plan, such as that of buying up such of them as might advantageously be converted into arable, and re-selling them in smaller lots. It is not an essential part of the scheme that every tenant should have an actual perpetuity, but only that every tenant who actually tills the soil should have the power of obtaining a perpetuity on an impartial valuation. I believe that as the plan comes to be more considered, its difficulties will, in a great measure, disappear, and the House will be more inclined to view it with favour than at present.

THE END.

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